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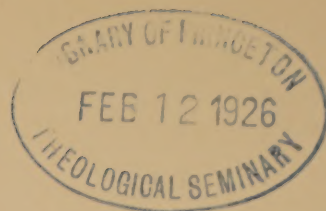
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Gregory of Tours and the
Gallic church of the sixth

To the Memory
of my
Father
John Rumsey Davies
Director of
Princeton Theological Seminary.
Princeton, New Jersey.



The University of Chicago.

Gregory of Tours and the Gallic
Church of the Sixth Century.

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Literature
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Hester Rogers Davies.

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Abbreviations used to designate the works of Gregory of Tours:

H. F. Historia Francorum. French translation by
Guizot.

Glor. Mart. De Gloria Martyrum.

Mir. S. Julien. De Miraculis Sancti Julianus.

Virt. S. Mart. De Virtutibus Sancti Martini.

Glor. Conf. De Gloria Confessorum.

V. P. Vitae Patrum.

INTRODUCTION

Among the Gallic churchmen of the sixth century certain prelates stand out from their contemporaries. There is Bishop Remi of Rheims,¹ famous for all time, because of his part in the conversion and baptism of the great Clovis.² Who does not know the dramatic words of that ceremony which Gregory of Tours has immortalized, and perhaps not originated,³ "Bend your head, O Sigamber; worship what you burned; burn what you worshipped."⁴ Then, there is Bishop Nicetius of Treves⁵ who came a little later in the century, and is noteworthy because of the brave stand that he took against the dissolute king Clothar, whom he dared to excommunicate; and because of the assistance he gave the Lombard queen Chlodoswinde in the conversion of her husband, Alboin.⁶ Then one might mention the tragic Praetextatus, Bishop of Rouen,⁷ central figure in that amazing trial, where, duped by the King's

1. Krueger, Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte, I, p. 279.

2. H. F., II, p. 91.

3. Kurth, Etudes Franques, II, p. 245.

4. H. F., II, p. 92.

5. Krueger, p. 279.

6. Kurth, II, p. 281.

7. Krueger, p. 279.

flatterers into making a false confession, he finds himself an outcast, his bishop's robe torn from him, and the CVIII psalm, with its curses against Iscariot, pronounced upon his head.⁸ Later, a royal reconciliation followed. Then his murder, at the instigation of queen Fredegunda, raised a cry through Rouen -- the Bishop struck down at the Altar, on the day of the Resurrection of the Saviour.⁹ Or one might mention the less exciting life of the respectable Germanus, Bishop of Paris,¹⁰ always in Kingly favor, and buried, at last, with great ceremony in the church that bears his name. Or there is Venantius Fortunatus,¹¹ made Bishop of Poitiers late in life, a poet from Italy who brought his rare gift into Gaul, and in his verses celebrated with high compliments¹² the lives and deeds of his adopted countrymen. In pompous style, in flattering rime he wrote of almost everyone in

8. H. F., V, pp. 250-253 (The CVIII psalm is incorrectly quoted here by Gregory.)

9. H. F., V, pp. 461, 463.

10. Krueger, p. 279.

11. Ibid., p. 279.

12. Kurth, I, p. 4.

Gaul.¹³ One of his verses is dedicated to an important churchman, Caesarius of Arles,¹⁴ perhaps the greatest of the Gallic prelates in his time¹⁵ -- at least, for half a century the most illustrious and influential of the Bishops of South Gaul.¹⁶ Here, then, we have come upon another worthy addition to our list -- a man whose life, we find, has been written by no less than five biographers,¹⁷ all friends and followers of his. The influence of his holy life was felt in distant parts of Gaul. Albinus from Angers in the west, and Nicetius of Treves in the north give evidence of his far-reaching fame.¹⁸ Beyond doubt, Caesarius of Arles is the most important bishop yet mentioned. Arles had long been of metropolitan rank, and was recognized by Rome as the centre of the Gallic church.¹⁹ Its bishop was the vicar of the Apostolic See

13. Monod, Etudes critiques sur les sources de l'histoire Merovingienne, p. 30.

14. Holmes, The Christian Church in Gaul, p. 510.

15. Kurth, I, p. 6.

16. S. Baring-Gould, Lives of the Saints, Vol. II, p. 343.

17. Holmes, p. 489.

18. Ibid., p. 510.

19. Ibid., p. 494.

in the west.²⁰ But Caesarius was not a leading figure purely because of his connection with the Papacy. His zeal as a preacher would place him far above the bishops of his age.²¹ His sermons in their clearness and directness, and rusticity of style, are not unlike the work of St. Augustine.²² Forty of these homilies have been preserved for us and they present practical advice on a wide range of subjects, from the duty of loving one's enemies, to the duty of kneeling in service.²³ And from all accounts it seems that Caesarius lived up to his own preaching. He was conspicuous for his generous giving, his asceticism, humility and obedience.²⁴ Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, on meeting him once, said, "I knew at once what kind of man he was, for as he entered the room I secretly trembled. I saw he had the face of an angel, and that he was of apostolic dignity."²⁵ Caesarius was, at heart,

20. Holmes, p. 515

21. Ibid., p. 507

22. Ibid.,

23. Ibid., p. 508

24. Ibid., p. 505

25. Ibid., p. 499

a monk. He loved the routine, cloistered life. Although he left his beloved monastery on the isle of Lerins very early in his career,²⁶ yet he often spoke and wrote feelingly about it.²⁷ He was so convinced of the benefits of monastic rules, that he wished women to share in them as well as men. And so he established the first nunnery for women in Gaul, the convent of St. John, on the Aliscompp Road near Arles.²⁸ From this retreat, later, went out devoted women who founded other nunneries all based on the rules and ideals of this model monastic house.²⁹ And Caesarius' originality is seen not only in his creation of the convent -- a thing without antecedent in Gaul -- but also in his unprecedented departure from traditional classical models in literature.³⁰ He broke away from the accepted standards primarily

26. Holmes, p. 491.

27. S. Baring - Gould, p. 345.

28. Ibid., p. 343.

29. Holmes, p. 506.

30. Kurth, I, p. 6.

because he despised pagan writings.³¹ He made no compromise with the great latin heritage; he abjured forever profane literature. And churchmen following in his steps looked with loathing and disgust upon the Roman masterpieces. This revulsion from pagan literature, led to a narrowing of the field; writings were unnaturally confined to subjects purely sacred and ecclesiastic. Caesarius of Arles was making a distinct break with the past, when he championed a culture exclusively ecclesiastic.³² We have in Caesarius a most outstanding figure - a man of high moral tone, a preacher of great earnestness and power, an organizer of monastic life, and the originator, perchance, of a genuinely sacred literature. Here is a bishop of ability and originality, a thinker and a leader of men. Why, then, are we not devoting our study to Caesarius of Arles and the Gallic Church of the sixth century? Shall we not stop with the great preacher of Southern Gaul? Who better could interpret the Gallic Church for us?

31. Holmes, p. 492.

32. Kurth, I, p. 11.

The answer to that question is Gregory, Bishop of Tours. Unfortunately, Gregory, who dominated the last half of the 6th century, as Caesarius did the first half, had no contemporaneous biographers. At his death, no loyal band of followers rose up to write the history of his life. The earliest account we have, was written in the tenth century,³³ and was drawn almost exclusively from the writings of Gregory himself.³⁴ So when we compare the work of Gregory and Caesarius we are at a disadvantage, for we know Gregory only thro' his writings. We get no other point of view. He fails to tell us if his sermons were effective. I don't think that he ever mentioned preaching. Whether he was an eloquent and impressive speaker, perhaps, we shall never know. His fame does not rest upon his sermons, for none of them has been preserved for us. But Caesarius was a famous preacher.³⁵ And Gregory was not

33. Monod, p. 25.

34. Ibid., p. 25.

35. Krueger, p. 279.

primarily a monk, nor did he get his training in a monastery,³⁶ nor does he write with feeling of a beloved cloistered walk. It does not appear, at any time, that he was particularly zealous in the cause of monasticism. In the course of his histories he mentions numerous religious houses, but quite incidentally; perhaps he refers to thirty that were flourishing, at that time, in Gaul.³⁷ But, he does not tell us of his active work in connection with any of them. His fame will not rest, as that of Caesarius, upon his monastic innovations. And in the realm of literature, his departure from the classical standards is not so much the result of his loathing for the pagan arts, as of his ignorance of the purer forms. He frankly writes quite often, that he knows his Latin is bad, and his style is poor.³⁸

The fame of Gregory of Tours rests entirely upon his writings - the ten books of his History of the Franks, and his seven books of Miracles and one book of the

36. Monod, p. 28.

37. Holmes, p. 528.

38. H. F., I, Preface, XXIV: Gregory, De Gloria Martyrum, Preface.

Lives of the Fathers.³⁹ His History is of inestimable value. The events which he selects give us an intimate and often first hand knowledge of the details of the perishing Roman Empire in the west;⁴⁰ and the substitution there of a new and gradually developing state. For this transitional century Gregory is often the sole authority. Therefore, his Ecclesiastical History of the Franks is the most valuable historical monument for that period of Frankish history.⁴¹

Now Caesarius was a great preacher and leader in his day, but his work was primarily for his own generation: he was a zealous reformer, and a spirited champion of righteousness in the early sixth century, but his influence, though splendid, was limited to his contemporaries. The problems of the immediate present engulfed him. His special care was the poor and ignorant of his

39. Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum, English transl by Brehaut, p. XV.

40. Ibid., p. IX.

41. Fisher, History of the Christian Church, p. 129.

diocese.⁴² To these he was ever preaching, and urging them to raise the standards of their physical and moral life. When they needed advice, he used heroic measures, locked the church doors so that none might elude his words of wisdom.⁴³ He was a father to his people. Now it is doubtful if Gregory of Tours meant as much as that to his own generation - at least he had no faithful biographers such as rallied about Caesarius⁴⁴ - but, what is more important, through his writings his influence was not confined to the men of his own day. Gregory had a tremendous vision, which no one else in that epoch seemed to have. He saw that literature and culture were dying out in Gaul, that there was no one to write the history of the times,⁴⁵ that, accordingly, there was danger that the great struggle of his church would be forgotten, the precious miracles of the Blessed Martin and countless others would go unrecorded - so, Gregory wrote.

42. Holmes, p. 493.

43. Ibid., p. 493.

44. Ibid., p. 489.

45. H. F., I, p. XXIII.

Gregory, then, rather than Caesarius, we choose, not because we think him a more spiritual man, or because he accomplished more for his own generation, but rather because he wrote especially for us. We are part of the posterity whom he wanted to understand the history of his times.⁴⁶ He gives us vivid pictures. We see the life of the narrow little streets, the procession following the bishop with the cross held high, the Jewish traders with gay wares, a group of brawling soldiers lately come from Spain, the king and his companions dashing by, the villain and the dagger lurking in the shadowed doorway. We are back again in the turbulent, lawless sixth-century Gaul. Gregory has made his epoch live again for us. Caesarius saw the needs of his own day; Gregory's farther vision went out across the centuries.

In passing it is interesting to note that Gregory barely mentions Caesarius. Reference to his name is made in two letters, one written by neighboring bishops to Radegonde⁴⁷ and one written by Radegonde in return.⁴⁸

46. H. F., I, p. XXIV.

47. H. F., IX, p. 60.

48. Ibid., p. 69.

This correspondence is in reference to the founding of the nunnery at Poitiers, and it was natural that they should write of Caesarius who had been long connected with the development of such institutions in Gaul. But apart from this mere quotation, Gregory says nothing of the life and work of the great bishop of Arles. Among the long lists of saints whom Gregory recognizes, the name of Caesarius does not occur,⁴⁹ and yet we know he has his place among the saints of Gaul.⁵⁰ His day is August 27.⁵¹ Gregory, at least once mentions Lerins,⁵² the beloved monastic home of Caesarius, but there is no reference to the prominent churchman who studied there; he speaks of the convent at Arles,⁵³ but says nothing of the founder of the institution. We can, perhaps, find no satisfactory reason for this omission. The many

49. Kurth, I, pp. 137-138.

50. S. Baring - Gould, IX, p. 343.

51. S. Baring - Gould, IX, p. 343.

52. Gregory of Tours, De Gloria Confessorum, XCVII.

53. H. F., IV, p. 181.

miracles worked by Caesarius⁵⁴ should have been sufficient proof of his holiness to endear him to Gregory. It is true that contemporary writers say little about him,⁵⁵ but Fortunatus dedicated a poem to him,⁵⁶ and Fortunatus was a friend of Gregory.⁵⁷ It is possible that Gregory knew of the five biographers who had already written fully of his life, and so considered any further remarks unnecessary. At least Gregory gives as an excuse for not writing of Hospicius,⁵⁸ the fact that he has been told that already his biography had been completed. Or the reasons may have been personal. Perhaps, Gregory had little sympathy with the connection that existed between Rome and Arles. He may not have approved of the papal sanction that had confirmed

54. Vita S. Caesarii, Acta Sanctorum, August VI, pp. 78-83.

55. Holmes, p. 509.

56. Ibid., p. 510.

57. Loebell, Gregor Von Tours und Seine Zeit, p. 10.

58. H. F., VI, p. 317.

metropolitan rights upon Caesarius and given him general oversight of Spain and Gaul.⁵⁹ For neither kings nor bishops believed in a strong metropolitan office.⁶⁰

Or, Gregory may have resented Caesarius' attempts to impose monastic austerities upon the bishops and other clergy.⁶¹ These conjectures, however, lead us nowhere; but it is significant that the bishop who dominated Southern Gaul, in the first half of the sixth century, should be so entirely ignored by the bishop - historian who later dominated central Gaul.

59. Holmes, p. 501.

60. Krueger, p. 280.

61. Holmes, p. 500.

II

The Life of Gregory of Tours.

It has already been indicated that our knowledge of the facts concerning the life of Gregory comes directly and almost exclusively from the writings of the man himself.¹ In the early part of the tenth century a life of Gregory was written by Odon of Cluny,² when yet a canon of the Church of St. Martin in Tours, in the year 899.³ The last three chapters of this biography contain material not gleaned from the churchman's writings,⁴ and therefore, represent perhaps legends and traditions that had grown up in Tours, and which Odon learned when he went there three centuries later. The one great purpose of his work is to prove that Gregory was a saint, and so he emphasizes the piety of the

1. Supra., Chap. I, Note 34.

2. Monod, p. 25.

3. Ibid., p. 25.

4. Ibid., p. 25.

bishop, and his religious activities, rather than the political events of the period. Our main sources for the life of Gregory are his History of the Franks, his seven books of Miracles and his Lives of the Fathers. From this heterogeneous material we can pick out some fragments of biography.

Gregory came from a long line of illustrious ancestors. His connections, on both sides, were senatorial,⁵ and in the sixth century that still bore the stamp of superiority and nobility. His father, Florentius, does not stand out particularly, and is supposed to have died young. Reference is made to the fact that he died before the mother, Armentaria, for Gregory tells us of certain sacred relics given to his mother, when his father died.⁶ His paternal grandfather was Georgius, Senator of Auvergne, and his paternal uncle, Gallus, Bishop of Auvergne. His mother, Armentaria, came of equally illustrious stock. One of her grandfathers was Florentius, Senator of

5. Monod, pp. 26, 27.

6. Glor. Mart., 84.

Geneva,⁷ and another was St. Gregory, Bishop of Langres. Of all the bishops of Tours, up to the middle of the sixth century, only five were not related to Gregory.⁸ So Gregory started out with an inheritance of culture and of piety.

The exact date of his birth is not known. There has been quite a deal of discussion on the subject.⁹ It was November 30, but whether the year is 543 or 538 is still undetermined. Bordier, one of the translators of the History of the Franks into french, supports the claim of the year 543.¹⁰ Monod thinks the year 538 is more accurate.¹¹ Loebell compromises by saying it was not earlier than 539, or later than 543.¹² However, the exact year of his birth is a minor detail.

The education of Gregory seems to have devolved upon his mother and his uncle Gallus, who was Bishop of

7. Monod, p. 27

8. H. F. V, p. 301.

9. Loebell, p. 7.

10. Monod, p. 27, Note 1.

11. Ibid., p. 28.

12. Loebell, p. 8.

Auvergne, and they set him apart for the church upon his recovery from a severe illness. To the intercession of the Blessed Saint Allyre this miracle was due.¹³ Gallus superintended the early years of Gregory's instruction, but he died in 554, and so when Gregory was a young boy, perhaps not more than twelve or fourteen, he passed under the tutelage of Avitus, Bishop of Clermont.¹⁴ This tutor testifies that his pupil had little fondness for secular studies, but excelled in the study of Church history.¹⁵ The opportunities for education in Gaul, in the sixth century, must have been rather limited. The great schools of the rhetors in Bordeaux and in Arles were being abandoned,¹⁶ and education now primarily ecclesiastic, was left to the indifferent methods of the monastery, and the doubtful culture of the bishop's households. The resulting

13. Monod, p. 28.

14. Kurth, I, p. 12.

15. Monod, p. 28.

16. Holmes, p. 511.

difference in preparation can best be seen by comparing the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris, with the writings of Gregory of Tours.¹⁷

Gregory's years of training were over by 563, at the latest, for in that year he was made deacon of Lyons,¹⁸ filling the position of his saintly uncle. His noble forbears and their ecclesiastical connections, his own pious inclinations, his numerous miraculous recoveries, and the affectionate regard of King Sigibert of Austrasia, all combined to warrant his speedy elevation in the church, and before very long he was elected by the clergy and the people of Tours, as the successor to Bishop Euphronius.¹⁹ Later, he was consecrated to his sacred office at Rheims,²⁰ not at Tours, for at that time Mummolus, general of King Gunthram, and Clovis were fighting for the possession of that city.²¹

17. Holmes, p. 511.

18. Monod, p. 29.

19. Loebell, p. 10.

20. Monod, p. 30, note 2.

21. Oman, The Dark Ages, p. 163

Tours was, at this time, the centre of the religious life of Gaul. The legend of St. Martin was largely responsible for this preëminence. Martin had been originally a Roman soldier, then a monk, and later bishop of Tours.²² His strenuous life had been devoted to the help and conversion of the rural people of Gaul. He had converted his episcopal palace into a monastery,²³ and, at his death, two thousand monks had followed his body to the grave. Gregory speaks very beautifully of him as the light that suddenly appeared, as the rays of a new star that illumined Gaul.²⁴ After his death in 397 the towns of Tours and Poitiers struggled for possession of his sacred body.²⁵ (for the holy man had died in Candes, between the two towns mentioned.) Gregory gives a vivid picture of the two opposing factions watching over the body during the night.²⁶

22. Gregory of Tours, Historio Francorum, English transl. by Brehaut, p. I.

23. Flick, The Rise of the Medieval Church, p. 212.

24. H. F., I, p. 29.

25. Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum, English Transl. by Brehaut, p. xx.

26. H. F., I, p. 37.

And his explanation of the outcome is typical of his firm belief in the preëminence of his own city. "The omnipotent God was unwilling that the city of Tours be deprived of its protector." The men of Poitiers fell heavily asleep -- the men of Tours quietly removed the body, placed it in a boat waiting on the river Vienne, and took it from thence to its final resting place in Tours.²⁷ A century later, the great Clovis having received an appointment to the consulship by the Emperor Anastasius I,²⁸ came to the church of St. Martin, and added to its celebrity by there donning the purple tunic. The kings of Gaul venerated this church,²⁹ and Clothar, murderer though he was,³⁰ piously remitted the taxes of the town, and gave generous gifts to the sanctuary.³¹ The ^{shrine} of St. Martin was the most popular in all Gaul. Here people came on pilgrimages -- the sick, the crippled, those possessed of demons - and marvelous cures were made.

27. H. F., I, p. 37.

28. H. F., II, p. 105.

29. H. F., IX, p. 45.

30. Oman, p. 114.

31. H. F., IV, p. 175.

It was to this church of rich tradition that Gregory came to succeed Bishop Euphronius.³²

Tours was an important city politically as well as religiously. It was situated on the Loire, in the very centre of Gaul, in a pleasant, fertile valley; and it lay between the province of Aquitaine, largely inhabited by remnants of the Roman stock, and the provinces of barbarian Teutons at the north. Tours was the point of contact between the two. It became later, a most strategic point, and the various Frankish leaders struggled for its possession. Originally included in king Charibert's kingdom, the town was on Charibert's death in 567 ceded to his brother, Sigibert of Austrasia.³³ But it was isolated and separated from Sigibert's other possessions and was constantly besieged by his brothers Gunthram and Chilperic. Gregory took up his work in Tours in the midst of these struggles, and he succeeded in keeping his church aloof from the turmoil, and in

32. Loebell, p. 10.

33. Oman, p. 161.

commanding respect from the various invaders. The story of his life reflects the story of the political feuds of the Frankish states in the last half of the sixth century.

The death of Sigibert in 575 was a great loss to Gregory. His protector and friend was gone, and Tours fell for a decade into the hands of Chilperic, a man who had been responsible for the murder of his wife, Galswintha, in 567, and then had married his former mistress, Fredegundis.³⁴ Gregory had been intensely loyal to his over lord, the king of Austrasia, and so he had a great deal to fear from this new and cruel ruler. But he was protected, somewhat, by his connection with the shrine of the Blessed Martin, for Chilperic with all his violence, and perhaps it is possible that Gregory has exaggerated this in the picture,³⁵ had a superstitious respect for sacred relics.³⁶ The town of Tours was handed over to a friend of Chilperic, named Leudast, and against him Gregory struggled desperately, for he abused

33. Oman, p. 161.

34. Ibid., p. 162.

35. Loebell, p. 340.

36. H. F., VI, p. 339.

His power by robbing the people and silencing the priests.³⁷ Eventually, Gregory succeeded in having him replaced by Eunomius, but the revengeful Leudast conspired with the deacon Riculf to bring serious charges against Gregory.³⁸ He was accused of maligning Queen Fredegundis. A church council was assembled at Braine in 580³⁹. King Chilperic was present and after giving his greeting, and receiving the priestly benediction, he took his seat among the prelates.⁴⁰ The various charges were brought forth, but, eventually, Gregory cleared himself by oaths, after mass had been said at three altars.⁴¹ The treacherous Leudast was driven out of Tours, and Riculf suffered many tortures.⁴² Relations with Clulperic were for a time, more harmonious. We find the king, in confidential mood, displaying his treasures to Gregory at Nogent-sur-Marne, the golden bowl with precious stones which had been made to celebrate the Frankish nation, and the gold coins sent

37. Monod, p. 32.

38. H. F., V, p. 292.

39. Monod, p. 33.

40. H. F., V, p. 298.

41. H. F., V, p. 299.

42. Ibid., p. 300.

him by the Emperor.⁴³

But the peace which came to Gregory and to Tours with the exile of Loudast, was not of long duration. In 581 Chilperic and his brother Gunthram started another civil war which centred around Tours. How Gregory bemoaned these useless civil wars!⁴⁴ But in 584 Chilperic was slain,⁴⁵ and the city of the Blessed Martin, freed from her cruel overlord, was given to the youthful Childebert II⁴⁶ and thus passed again into the hands of the house of Austrasia. Gregory was rewarded for his loyalty to the house of Sigibert, and became the guide and adviser of the new king. He consulted with him at Coblentz, at Metz, and was chosen ambassador to king Gunthram at Chalon-sur-Saone.⁴⁷ Our churchman has become a mighty diplomat. The very pleasant relationships established meant the cessation of internal wars, the resumption of trade, and peaceful pursuits.⁴⁸ And Childebert showed

43. H. F., VI, p. 305.

44. Ibid., V, p. 217.

45. Ibid., VII, p. 377.

46. Monod, p. 24.

47. H. F., IX, p. 26.

48. Ibid., p. 31.

his respect for Gregory by exempting the city of Tours from the payment of any taxes.⁴⁹ What greater tribute to the Bishop and his city, could there be?

But, Gregory, with all his wider interests did not neglect the details of his parish work. These cares were always his first consideration. He rebuilt the basilica of St. Martin,⁵⁰ and had the walls redecorated. He planned a baptistery where the relics of Saint John might be guarded. He dedicated churches and oratories and was always especially solicitous of the sacred bones of martyrs.⁵¹ The miracles of Saint Martin became so numerous and so precious, that Gregory wrote them all down -- eight books in all. The poems of his ardent admirer, Fortunatus⁵² reflect the popularity and the activity of the churchman in local affairs, in political and religious circles. We have no details of the end of Gregory's life.

49. H. F., p. 45

50. Ibid., X, p. 150.

51. Ibid., X, p. 150.

52. Loebell, p. 10.

The history stops shortly after the elevation of Gregory I to the papacy in 590;⁵³ so it seems that death came to him about the year 593.⁵⁴

53. H. E., X. p. 76.

54. Loebell, p. 15, note 3.

III

Gregory's History of the Franks.

At this point it seems proper to consider, somewhat briefly, Gregory's History of the Franks and his historical method. In this short study I do not intend to emphasize the bad Latin,¹ the errors in Geography, and the discrepancies in historical data. I shall not lament his use of the ablative case when the accusative is proper. I shall not follow with superior finger the Nile to its fantastic outlet - the Red Sea.² I shall only faintly challenge his story of the conquest of Brittany by Frankish kings.³ On none of these blunders will I gloat! Nor am I willing to brand Gregory that "half-illiterate monk of the sixth century",⁴ and leave him there, without making any explanations. I want rather to think of Gregory as a product of his times, to see him in the setting of the sixth century and that will

1. Bonnet, Le Latin de Gregoire de Tours, p. 4.

Cambridge Medieval History, II, p. 157.

2. H. F., I, p. 10.

3. Ibid., IV, p. 154. note 1.

4. Robinson, Medieval and Modern Times, p. 30.

account for many of his inadequacies. His history is a unique contribution to our knowledge of the men, the manners, and the morals of that period. His work is a precious heritage, to be criticised perhaps, but primarily to be appreciated. Out of that transitional, chaotic and inarticulate Gaul, there comes to us one voice, and it is the testimony of Gregory, Bishop of Tours.

The preface to Gregory's history is most illuminating. In those few sentences Gregory not only reveals his purpose in writing, but also grants us an insight into his character and mental make-up. He begins by bemoaning the lack of culture among the Gauls,⁵ that literature and science are perishing in their cities, that there is no one to write down the history of the times. Then he enumerates the things he considers important; the fierceness of the barbarians, and the fury of the kings are his only secular topics.

5. H. F., I, Pref. xxiii.

The subjects that interest him most -- those he wishes to hand down to posterity -- are these: how the church was attacked by heretics, and defended by loyal catholics, how the pious gave generous gifts and how the infidels despoiled the altars; how the Christian heart, though fervent, often was timid and weak in the performance of duty. These are the vital things that go to make up the history of the sixth century. And so, we can see immediately that Gregory is primarily interested in ecclesiastical history. He is always the churchman. Secular history will be treated only as of secondary importance; we may get scraps of information on the side, but the motive in writing is consumingly religious. In the next few sentences we learn something more of Gregory. He confesses his deficiencies humbly,⁶ but, brave spirit that he is, he will write, nevertheless. Immediately our sympathy goes out to this honest amateur. He knows his Latin is not classic, and he lacks the style

6. H. F., I. p. xxiii.

and the arts of the rhetorician, but he must immortalize the struggles of his church. And so he sets himself to his tremendous task. And then the last sentence of the Preface brings a smile to our lips, and we realize how far away we are from the times of Gregory. The sixth century is doing what the twentieth cannot do! Gregory is going to calculate the exact number of years since the creation of the world. And here, the worthy churchman feels no limitations. Here there is no need of apology. Gregory has his facts well in hand; and twice in his history he computes those years from the dawn of creation to the death of Saint Martin as five thousand, five hundred and forty-six.⁷ The churchman, in that age of faith speaks always with authority!

Gregory's History of the Franks is contained in ten books. It starts with the creation of the world.⁸ Orosius, whom we find quoted occasionally by Gregory, and who was one of the chief sources,⁹ began his History of the World in that same garden spot of Eden. Gregory suggests briefly

7. H. F., p. 38. Ibid., IV, pp. 215, 216.

8. Ibid., p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 3.

the old Testament stories and follows the history of the Hebrews through their captivity in Babylon. He passes lightly over the subsequent period of six hundred years, then gives the birth, and life and death of Christ.¹⁰

From this, he merges into Roman History speaking of the persecutions¹¹ and the martyrs and mentioning the pious Theodosius,¹² and ending his first book with the work and death of the Blessed Martin in the year 397.¹³

With book ii Gregory's work becomes more important for us, because he localizes his history in Gaul, beginning with Childeric and Clovis. The span of Gregory's life fell within the period of the rule of Clothar I and his sons: Sigibert of Austrasia; Charibert, king of Paris, Gunthram, king of Burgundy, and Chilperic, king of Soissons; and the two grand sons Clothar II and Childebert II.¹⁴ The political interest of this period centres in the tiresome and useless struggles of the House of Sigibert and

10. H. F., I, p. 16.

11. Ibid., p. 21.

12. Ibid., p. 30.

13. Gregory of Tours, Historia Francorum, English transl. by Brehaut, p xx.

14. Oman, p. 168.

Chilperic.

Gregory's motive in writing history was not secular, but ecclesiastic. We discovered that in his preface, but we realize it more as we continue to read. So often, when we are intent upon some inside information, Gregory will distract us with endless accounts of miracle-workings. Of course, this is the method later used by Bede in his Ecclesiastical History of England, and by Orosius, Jerome and Eusebius, those predecessors of Gregory whom he followed.¹⁵ But it is a tantalizing method nevertheless. A good example of this very thing may be seen in studying the account given of Clovis attack upon Alaric II, king of the Visigoths. Gregory writes, "Since these words (of Clovis) pleased all, he set his army in motion, and made for Poitiers where Alaric was at that time."¹⁶ The historically minded are now all set for some interesting details, but instead the churchman takes up our time proving how loyal Clovis was to the

15. H. F., II, p. 39.

16. Ibid., p. 101.

Blessed Martin;¹⁷ how he received an omen of victory from the first words of the chant;¹⁸ how the hind miraculously forded the swollen river Vienne,¹⁹ and led the army across in safety; how the ball of fire came out of the church of St. Hilarius,²⁰ and shone above the head of Clovis; how the abbot Maxentius paralyzed the arm of the offending soldier and then restored it with the sacred oil and the sign of the cross.²¹ After these five detours, Gregory continues his narration of the conflict. But the information is very scanty. Three or four lines give us the historical data; fully three pages are filled with fanciful stories. Another example of this lack of proportion - which, of course, merely emphasizes the fact that Gregory was interested in religious rather than secular affairs - is seen in Childebert's expedition into Italy.²² It has such possibilities for

17. H. F., II, p. 39.

18. Ibid., II, p. 102.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 103.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., IX, p. 39.

narration and color, but we get one small paragraph; yet in the same book eighteen pages are devoted to the revolt in the nunnery at Poitiers.²³ Again our interest is aroused at the prospect of getting a description of the meeting of Clovis and Alaric II on the island in the Loire -²⁴ near Amboise - instead we get a paragraph, and a short one. Yet just before we have had a lengthy discourse between Bishop Avitus and King Gundobad over the question of confessing in public, the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁵ Gregory is interested in these characters, and these events, not for what they are in themselves, but merely as media to demonstrate the working of the Divine will in the world.

That Gregory was thoroughly acquainted with his Bible is evident from the great number of biblical quotations that he uses. In book i, outside of his narration of Bible history, he refers at least twenty times to the Scriptures; in book vi, thirty-three times, and so on. In his descriptive passages often one can trace the biblical method and phraseology. The best example of this sort of thing is

23. H. F., IX, pp. 56-74.

24. Ibid., II, p. 100.

25. Ibid., pp. 97-99.

in the dramatic story of the siege of Orleans.²⁶ The Huns are on the way, Metz has fallen, the country side has been laid waste. In panic the citizens hasten to the church for comfort and protection. The Bishop Ammianus is praying for the city. He bids them go to the wall, and scan the southern horizon. They pray again, and again they search from the battlements. At last they see afar off a cloud rising from the earth.- It is the force of Aetius and Theodoric. This story is told with all the dramatic power of the writer of the Book of Kings. It is quite patterned after the crisis on Mt. Carmel.²⁷

Ammianus is Elijah, the people take the place of the prophet's servant, and the cloud, in both cases, is the signal of the victory.

The most startling parallelism, however, is seen in the closing words of book x. Gregory is bringing his history to conclusion and he uses these solemn final words:²⁸ "I conjure you all by the coming of our Lord

26. H. F., II, p. 56.

27. I Kings, 18.

28. H. F., X, pp. 150, 151.

Jesus Christ and the judgment day if you will not be condemned with the devil and depart in confusion from the judgment -- never cause these books to be destroyed or rewritten, selecting some pages and omitting others." Gregory very boldly here takes almost the exact wording of the close of the Book of Revelations: "If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city."³⁰

30. Revelations 22: 18, 19.

IV

The Religion of Gregory.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of Gregory is his credulity. All through his writings one is impressed by the endless narration of miracles and marvels. And Gregory tells them all in good faith, for he sincerely believes them. He does not know anything more natural than the supernatural.¹ He asks us, in childish fashion, to accept the most astonishing facts. Did you know that the ruts made by the chariots of Pharoah when crossing the Red Sea are still visible today to anyone who cares to investigate.² At one time, near Paris, real drops of blood fell from the clouds.³ A mountain was torn completely away at Tauredunum on the Rhone,⁴ and Gregory assures us "there is no doubt of this tale." Did you know that the reason why Paris was free

1. Kurth, II, p. 122.

2. H. F., I, p. 11.

3. Ibid., VI, p. 327.

4. Ibid., IV, pp. 185-6.

from snakes and mice was because, down under the bridge, a bronze model of each pest had been carefully preserved?⁵ When the earth trembled violently at Angers,⁶ and when serpents fell from the skies,⁷ that was a token to Gregory of the sudden death of a king. And just before the fatal plague in Clermont, a lark was seen entering the church, and in its frenzied, startled flight extinguished all the lights and tapers.⁸

But Gregory's credulity is even more striking in connection with his religious faith. With Gregory all things are possible. God is constantly revealing himself thro the virtues of his saints. There is the story of Saint Calupan,⁹ the hermit, who left the monastery in Auvergne, and went off to a lonely, rocky den, there bent to keep his vigil. But his hours of meditation were disturbed by snakes, that dropped upon his head and wound themselves about his throat; and dragons crept up through his cavern from the bowels of the earth. Now, many another

5. H. F., VIII, p. 467.

6. Ibid., VII, p. 384.

7. Ibid., IX, p. 3.

8. Ibid., IV, p. 187.

9. Gregory, Vitae Patrum, XI.

hermit might have grown discouraged, but so great was the holiness of Calupan that he made the sign of the cross, spoke a few sharp words, and the devil-forms were gone. He tells us of the lighted lamp that hung in front of the pious Galsuenda's tomb. It fell on the hard stone pavement, but instead of being broken, was only embedded as in a soft and yielding substance.¹⁰ Or it is the story of the impious Jew who pierced, through deviltry, a holy crucifix in church, then hastened stealthily home. But he was caught. The broken image sent forth drops of blood that tracked the footsteps of the guilty man.¹¹ One night when Gregory was keeping watch at the church of the Blessed St. Medard, his lonely vigil was interrupted by the noisy entrance of a prisoner, bearing some of his clanking chains. It was Modestus, just miraculously saved from two strong guards who bound him to a pillar.¹² In breathless haste, he tells how prayers to the Blessed Martin and the Blessed Saint Medard broke off his chains

10. H. F., IV, p. 182.

11. Glor Mart., 22.

12. H. F., V, p. 298.

and set him free. And there was the story of the famous recluse Ebarchius, who, because of his great holiness, was able to bring back to life a criminal pronounced dead.¹³ And did not everyone know that the lamp at the tomb of Saint Marcellin would burn a very long time without adding oil, and, if a gust of wind suddenly blew out the flame, the virtue of the saint always relighted it.¹⁴ Miracles such as these were simply a part of Gregory's everyday existence. All his life he had been surrounded by them. Maybe, it is only a headache cured,¹⁵ or a fire put out by the use of sacred relics that his mother kept,¹⁶ or his sister's husband restored to health by candles from St. Martin's shrine.¹⁷ Many of these wonders he had seen with his own eyes. The marvel of the cracked lamp, always full of oil, he had gazed upon at the tomb of St. Hilarius

13. H. F., VI, p. 318.

14. Glor. Conf., 69, Sancti Juliani.

15. Gregory, De Miraculis Sancti Juliani, 25.

16. Glor. Conf., 3.

17. Gregory, De Virtutibus Sancti Martini, II, 2.

in Poitiers.¹⁸ And the malformed man with twisted limbs had been made straight and whole by the virtue of Saint Martin.¹⁹ Gregory reassures us "I saw the man myself." There are endless narrations of the supernatural. Not often, but occasionally the recital of so many wonders, seems unnecessary to Gregory. At least, once, he says directly, "He did many other miracles which I have thought it tedious to relate."²⁰ But though narration may, at times, grow tiresome, yet Gregory's belief in miracles never wavers. In fact, those who doubt, are possessed, indeed, by an evil spirit.²¹ Once Gregory acknowledges he was troubled by disbelief; he was not sure of the remarkable virtue of the lamps that burned at Poitiers -- until he had been there to see.²² But rarely does this questioning spirit, born of the evil one, overtake our credulous Gregory. Recall with what tremulous, eager fingers he touches the linen which had

18. Glor. Mart., 5.

19. Virt. Mort., II, 24.

20. H. E., VI, p. 319.

21. Kurth, II, p. 124.

22. Glor. Mart., 5.

wrapped the Saviour's cross.²³

Gregory would not be a product of sixth century Gaul, if he were not a rigorously orthodox Catholic.²⁴ The struggle with Arianism was still a vital issue in that day, and Gregory as a Bishop of the Frankish church held most intolerant views in regard to so-called heretics. Our Gallic prelate is most bigoted. For Jews and Arians he shows only contempt. Those who cannot subscribe to the doctrine of the Trinity are beyond the reach of heavenly mercy. Gregory starts writing his history by a personal confession of his faith;²⁵ he wants primarily to have his readers know that he is Catholic. Again, in the prologue of book iii of the History of the Franks he states the doctrine of the Trinity; that he confesses "one God always the same and everlasting in respect to the number of persons, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."²⁶ And to the belief in the tenets of this confession Gregory attributes good luck and prosperity. For example, take

23. Glor. Mart., 6.

24. Kurth, 2, p. 126.

25. H. F., I, pp. 1,2.

26. Ibid., III, p. 112.

Hilarius, Blessed defender of undivided Trinity, though sent into exile for its sake, yet was eventually restored to his native land and, what is more, to Paradise.²⁷ King Clovis confessed it, was baptised, and God gave him the grace to crush his enemies, and extend his power over all Gaul.²⁸ On the other hand, Alario, who denied it, was deprived of his kingdom and people, and what is more, of eternal life, itself. "And to true believers, even if through the plots of the enemy they lose something, the Lord restores it a hundred fold;²⁹ but heretics do not gain any advantage and what they seem to have is taken from them. This is proven by the deaths of Godegisel, Gundobad, and Sodomar, who at the same time lost their country and their souls." Gregory would make of the doctrine of the Trinity a magic Shibboleth; the repetition of its phrases a certain guide to Paradise. But woe to those who stubbornly refuse! O wretched men without remorse!³⁰

27. H. E., III, p. 112.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., VI, p. 311.

And Gregory gives us proof that God's mercy does not rest upon the unbeliever. The children whom the Arian priest impiously baptised in the Catholic church at Arles died within the week after the Easter celebration.³¹ Their death was timely, surely, Gregory thought. Is this the same Gregory who wrote with touching pathos in reference to the ravages of the plague, "We lost dear sweet children whom we nursed upon our knees, or carried in our arms, and nourished with attentive care?"³² The lamented children were of the Catholic faith.

And the Arian Eucharist was not a holy thing to God. It had no magic potency to withstand a poison drought. Queen Audofleda met her death taking the cup prepared by her own wicked daughter.³³ But Gregory reassures us of the Catholic mass. The faithful worshipper of the Trinity could drink poison in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and go unharmed!

Indeed, all Arians are bad. Did not Gaisuenta,

31. Glor. Conf., 48.

32. H. F., V, p. 271.

33. Ibid., III, p. 145.

Arian queen of Spain, beat her catholic daughter-in-law in outrageous fashion.³⁴ What horrible neighbors they were for decent folk in Southern Gaul!³⁵ It was common talk that when they wearied of a ruler, they merely killed him off!³⁶ And how they persecuted the faithful in Africa³⁷ and (5) in Spain.³⁸ It was a blessing when the Arian Bishop Athalocus breathed out his worthless soul!³⁹

And the unbelieving Jew was a menace also the to community. It was in Clermont, on an Easter day, that a Jew threw stinking oil upon the head of an apostate brother that had joined the white-clad procession of the faithful.⁴⁰ But retribution came. Not long afterwards their synagogue was utterly destroyed. And at Orleans, too, their temple was torn down.⁴¹ "But King Gunthram," says Gregory, "knew

34. H. F., V, p. 277.

35. Ibid., VIII, p. 457.

36. Ebid., III, p. 144.

37. Ibid., II, p. 45.

38. Ibid., V, p. 276.

39. Ibid., IX, p. 21.

40. Ibid., V, p. 333.

41. Seresia, L'Eglise et l'etat au VI siecle, p. 110.

the tribe, wicked, treacherous, and always living by cunning." When they flattered him hoping thereby to have him rebuild their synagogue at public cost, he stubbornly refused. And Gregory applauding the rebuff cried out, "O, king, glorious for wonderful vision. You understand the craft of the heretics."⁴² Again when archdeacon Leonastis of Bourges had his sight restored at the Blessed Martin's shrine, he was not satisfied, it seems, but got a certain Jew to apply cupping glasses to his shoulders.⁴³ Immediately, of course, his cataracts returned. "For such is the warning and reproof of the apostle, saying, 'Be not yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? What communion hath light with darkness? What portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?'" To Gregory all Jews and Arians are outcasts, perfidious deceitful.⁴⁴ They are cut off from all connection with the true church here, and from hope of heaven hereafter.

42. H. F., VIII, p. 427.

43. Ibid., V, p. 230.

44. Ibid., VI, p. 329.

And what was Gregory's estimate of a good man? If we can see what Gregory thought was good, we may know Gregory. At one place he describes quite fully a man "of magnificent goodness and piety."⁴⁵ Why was this Chrodinus so admirable? What constitutes, in Gregory's mind, a pious man? Chrodinus was good because he was "a great alms giver and helper of the poor, a lavish enricher of churches, and supporter of the clergy. For he often cleared estates, laying out vineyards, building houses, making fields, and he would then invite bishops, who were poor, and give them a feast, and generously distribute among them houses with fields, and men to till them, and silver, and bedding, and utensils, and officers and slaves, saying, 'Let these properties be given to the church, that when poor men are supported upon them, they may obtain pardon for me, before God.'" In other words, a man was good if he loyally supported the bishops and other clergy, generously supplied them with material benefits, and had complete confidence in their ability to redistribute

45. H. E., VI, p. 333.

such goods among the poor.

This point may be still further explained by a study of Gregory's attitude towards Clovis. Book 11 of the History of the Franks is our chief source for the history of this great Frankish king, for there exists no contemporary account of his life,⁴⁶ and even though Gregory dealt with his subject in the spirit of a zealous churchman, and wrote half a century later, yet he is the best and nearest authority. The church did feel an intense partisan sympathy for its eldest royal Teuton son,⁴⁷ yet no one can deny that Gregory speaks very frankly of the deeds of Clovis, bad as well as good. He keeps nothing from us. He tells us that Clovis' father Childeric was excessively wanton,⁴⁸ and that his mother Basina ran away from her legal husband, king of Thuringia, and married Childeric.⁴⁹ No mention is made of anything that would suggest infidelity on the part of Clovis. But chastity, if that were one of

46. Kitchin, History of France, I, p. 70, note 1.

47. Taylor, Medieval Mind, I, p. 121.

48. H. F., II, p. 72.

49. Ibid., p. 73.

his virtues, seems to be the only one. That he was a murderer, a liar, a schemer, a hypocrite, Gregory gives us adequate proof. Clovis killed with his own hand, the soldier who destroyed the vase at Soissons.⁵⁰ That was before his hasty conversion, but after it, he hacked with his ax both Ragnachar and his brother Ricchar.⁵¹ He schemed with Cloderic to secure the kingdom of the father Sigibert,⁵² and when the father was dispatched, the men of Clovis murdered Cloderic.⁵³ He lied to the people of that kingdom when he posed as their protector, and, in sympathetic tones, said he knew nothing of the death of their late rulers.⁵⁴ Again, he deliberately deceived the vassal lords of Ragnachar by sending gifts of bronze,⁵⁵ gilded to resemble gold. And through all this, our churchman speaks no word of censure. The lying, scheming, hypocritical, murdering Clovis appears to

50. H. F., II, p. 87.

51. Ibid., p. 109.

52. Ibid., p. 105.

53. Ibid., p. 106.

54. Ibid., p. 107.

55. Ibid., p. 108.

him to be a hero, decidedly in favor with the Lord. The victory over the Goths was by God's aid.⁵⁶ After the treacherous dealings with Sigibert and the people of his kingdom, Gregory, in good faith writes, "For God was laying his enemies low every day under his bond, and was increasing his kingdom because he walked with an upright heart before him, and did what was pleasing in his eyes."⁵⁷

The pleasing thing to which Gregory refers is, no doubt, the conversion of Clovis to the orthodox Christian faith. It was the great triumph of the church over Arianism, when the mighty Clovis took up the cudgels of the church, and using that pious reason for his pretext, conquered the heretic peoples of Gaul.⁵⁸ Clovis gave the assistance that the bishops needed in converting pagan and heretic Gaul. Clovis was the chosen instrument of God. What did it matter if he was a murderer? He was also the friend of bishops, and laid generous gifts before the throne of Heaven.⁵⁹

56. H. F., II, p. 104.

57. Ibid., p. 107.

58. Ibid., p. 101.

59. Ibid., p. 104.

And this attitude of Gregory toward Clovis is certainly a commentary on our churchman of the sixth century. His open admiration for the perfidious Frank is something that we cannot nicely reconcile with our ideas of Christian standards. We are forced to the conclusion that the sixth century made no fine ethical distinctions. I think the most interesting revelation of Gregory's mental make-up and religion is found in his one word of censure. The murders, the lies, the treacheries bring forth no ecclesiastical anathema; nor is explanation given. Gregory accepts all these discrepancies without a comment. There is only one thing he disapproves of: Clovis' army had despoiled many churches,⁶⁰ but he hastens to add "since he was as yet involved in heathen error." After his conversion to the orthodox faith, his confession of the Trinity, and his Baptism, Clovis no longer destroyed Christian churches, but he did go on with his policy of perfidy and murder. According to sixth century standards, a Christian gentleman

60. H. F., II, p. 86.

could quite respectably hack off his neighbor's head -- provided he performed his duties to the church, faithfully fulfilled his vows and made rich gifts to the bishop of his diocese.

Another striking example of this very thing is seen in Gregory's treatment of king Clothar. He gives an account of the struggle going on between the king and his rebellious son Chramnus, of the capture of the rebel, and his cruel death. King Clothar ordered that his son, with his wife and children should be burned in the hut where they had taken refuge.⁶¹ Gregory recites all this without one word of protest. In the next sentence he continues, "King Clothar set out for the door of the Blessed Martin with many gifts, and coming to the tomb of the bishop just mentioned at Tours, he repented all the deeds he had perhaps done heedlessly." The burning of the son, with his wife and daughters, was perhaps a little heedless -- nothing more. Gregory could not easily forget the generous gift of King Clothar,⁶² when

61. H. P., IV, p. 175.

62. Ibid., p. 174.

after the fire he repaired the roof of the church at Tours by using tin, and restored the interior to its former beauty.

Because Clothar and Clovis were loyal to the church, our Gallic prelate does not condemn them for their perfidy and cruelty. The king upon whom Gregory comments most harshly is King Chilperic.⁶³ In Gregory's eyes he was thoroughly bad. Notice the charges made against him. "He belittled and ridiculed the bishops of the Lord; he hated the causes of the poor; he wrote hymns and masses which could in no wise be used; and he broke wills that were made in favor of churches." Chilperic was an outcast primarily because he had defied the church, he was jealous of its wealth and the power of its bishops. So often he had said, "Behold, our treasury has remained poor, behold our wealth has gone to the churches."⁶⁴

If one takes, as a criterion, these examples of Gregory's treatment of Clovis, Clothar and Chilperic, he must conclude that Gregory was a bigoted churchman.

63. H. F., VI, pp. 370, 371.

64. Ibid.

His religion would seem to rest upon a very material basis. Man's moral conduct seemed to count for very little. Religion was a mechanical, external adjustment of the individual, to the ecclesiastical system of the day. It was quite thoroughly enmeshed by superstition; it was a thing of rites, and miracles and magic. But it is possible that this leniency of Gregory toward the misdeeds of the powerful merovingian rulers was merely a question of expediency. Unfortunately, Gregory writes very little about the humble folk,⁶⁵ so we cannot get from his writings, his reaction toward the misdeeds of the common man. In fact, Gregory rarely makes a personal comment. But it is very possible that the Gallic prelate who winked at royal misbehaviors might censure similar weakness in the priest and the ordinary peasant.

65. Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales dans l'ancienne France", Revue Historique, LX, p. 261.

The Importance of the Gallic Bishop.

Gregory of Tours has no doubts in his mind about the importance of the office of bishop. "Since our God always designs to give glory to his Bishops" is a very characteristic phrase.¹ And since the bishop was a representative of the Lord any criticism of the holy office was looked upon as sacrilege. There was the terrible fate of the two priests who rebelled against the Blessed Sidonius.² Because of their persecution of him they both went together into hell. For Gregory plainly tells us that not to obey a bishop is a crime.³ And, no doubt, it is on the basis of that teaching that Gregory fails to blame Clovis when he smites the soldier at Soissons⁴ -- the one who, the year before had broken the vase. If you go back far enough in that famous story, you will find that Clovis was obliging and obeying a bishop when he sought to salvage that one vase. Nantinus, count of Angouleme⁵ who had been a bitter enemy of

1. H. F., V, p. 232.

2. Ibid., II, p. 83.

3. Ibid., VIII, p. 443.

4. Ibid., II, p. 86.

5. Ibid., V, pp. 274, 275.

all bishops came to a very sad end. He died of the plague, and his body, after death, turned black as if burned by living coals. And count Munnichius of Limoges, who started the cruel scandal about Charterius, Bishop of Perigueux, was well punished for his audacity.⁶ God struck him with an apoplectic stroke and his property was taken by the king. And here is yet another instance: when the holy Dalmatius, bishop of Rodez, passed away, there were many candidates for the office. The priest Transobad, eager for promotion, prepared a feast for the clergy of the city. And while they were seated, one of the priests began to malign and abuse the departed bishop. While he was treacherously speaking, a servant came, offering him a cup, and as he was raising it to his lips, his hand shook, the goblet dropped, his head sank upon the shoulder of his neighbor, and he gave up the ghost.⁷ When Palladius, count of Gevaudan quarreled with Bishop Parthenius⁸ and insulted him, he was removed from office

6. H. F. VI, p. 334.

7. Ibid., V, p. 291.

8. Ibid., IV, pp. 198-199.

and Count Romanus took his place. Some time later, Palladius, haunted by his evil conduct toward the bishop, and fearing for his life, committed suicide. His body was carried to a nearby monastery and buried without receiving the solemn service of the mass. And Gregory comments: "This evidently happened to him for nothing else than his insult to the bishop."⁹ The deacon Bricius had poked fun at the Blessed Martin, and called him crazy.¹⁰ Years later, when he succeeded to the bishopric he suffered many misfortunes and humiliations, and often wept for the wrong he had done the bishop. Gregory gives us ample proof that the bishop was the chosen of the Lord, and that to abuse, or criticise or disobey him was a heinous crime.

As we study Gregory's History of the Franks, we discover that the election of a bishop might occur in a number of ways. It seems that in sixth century Gaul there was considerable irregularity in the methods

9. H. F., V, p. 199.

10. Ibid., II, pp. 40-43.

of electing such officials. According to the canons of the church, bishops were to be chosen by the clergy and the people with the assistance of the neighboring bishops.¹¹ After the clergy and people had made known their choice, then the king might affirm it. In the canons it is also seen that the right of the king to choose a candidate or to give approval of the choice of the clergy and the people is not contested.¹² The fifth council of Orleans, 549, expressly recognized this right.¹³ Occasionally, bishops might try to manage elections absolutely independently of the king. An example of this is seen when, at the funeral of bishop Gall of Auvergne, the neighboring bishops proposed to raise Cato to the episcopacy. And this to be done without the consent of the young king.¹⁴ But Cato would not accept such a nomination. He said, "it must be done according to the canons." And this is rather good evidence that the king was expected to have a share in the

11. Tardif, Etudes sur les institutions politiques, p. 134.

12. Ibid., p. 136.

13. Lagarde, The Latin Church in the Middle Ages, p. 348.

14. H. E., IV, p. 156.

appointment. Yet Gregory gives us elections of bishops that depart from the canonical regulations. Theodore and Proculus were practically appointed by Queen Clotilda.¹⁵ Again, by order of King Sigibert, Promotus was made Bishop of Chateaudun.¹⁶ A coterie of bishops pushed through the election of Cato.¹⁷ Sometimes, neither king nor bishop is mentioned. There is the case of Gregory, who was elected Bishop of Langres by the people.¹⁸ Sometimes the people and the king cooperate as in the election of Nicetius, Bishop of Lyons.¹⁹ And in the selection of candidates for the episcopal office there seems considerable irregularity. When Florentius, a married man, and a Senator is demanded by the citizens of the town, the prince consents and the choice is thus confirmed.²⁰ Then, again, Injuriosus, a plain citizen of the town is

15. H. F., III, p. 134.

16. Ibid., VI, p. 389.

17. Ibid., IV, p. 156.

18. V. P., VII, 2.

19. Ibid., VIII, 3.

20. Ibid., VIII, 1.

elected.²¹ Usually, it is a deacon who is so honored²² and episcopal consecration is conferred upon him without his passing through the presbyterate. When the priest Cato is offered the position of bishop he replies in terms that suggest canon regulations: "The Lord to whom I have paid such service will not allow me to be deprived of this office. For I attained all the grades of the clergy, as directed in the canons. I was reader ten years. I performed the duties of sub-deacon five years, I have been priest now for twenty years. What more is left for me except to receive the office of bishop which my faithful service deserves."²³

But there was a very decided departure from canon rule in the selection of Eusebius, the Syrian merchant, who became Bishop of Paris.²⁴ There is a hint of bribery in this election: "he gave presents," Gregory comments. And the priest Eufrasius, having received from the Jews precious utensils,²⁵ sent them to the king, hoping to

21. H. F., III, p. 135.

22. Lagardo, pp. 72-73.

23. H. F., IV, p. 156.

24. Ibid., X, pp. 131-132.

25. Ibid., IV, p. 191.

obtain, by this present, what he could not by merit. Gregory describes this priest as agreeable in conversation, but not chaste in his life; and we are glad to learn that Avitus, who gave no gifts, and made no promises, was elected by the clergy instead.²⁶

Apollinaris was more successful with his bribery. His gifts to king Theodoric got him the episcopate; but Gregory adds significantly, "He enjoyed this privilege, unjustly, for four months, then departed from this world."²⁷

As the office of Metropolitan or Archbishop -- the distinction between these two was never very clear,²⁸ and was eventually lost -- became prominent, in the western church after the sixth century, these officials became another factor in the episcopal election. They usually conducted the election, confirmed and ordained

26. H. F., IV, p. 192.

27. Ibid., III, pp. 113, 114.

28. Catholic Encyclopedia, I, p. 691.

the candidate. They claimed a veto upon the appointment of a bishop within their province.²⁹ But in Gregory's history not many references are made to them. Only a few instances are given where metropolitans assert their power. It seems that the office was not entirely forgotten; yet it had not attained its full importance. In Gregory's day, the influential bishops quite outnumbered the occasional metropolitans. One instance, however, is in regard to the election of Bishop Emeri,³⁰ whom the neighboring bishops deposed because he had had a decree from King Clothar that he should be consecrated without the consent of the metropolitan, who was not present. "This honor had not been given him in accordance with the canons" Gregory writes. It seems, then, that the church canons recognized the part of the metropolitan in the confirmation of the bishop. It is true also that the fifth council of Orleans of 549³¹ and the

29. Hatch, Growth of Church Institutions, p. 125, note 1.

30. H. F., IV, p. 179.

31. Holmes, p. 522.

fifth council of Paris of 577 both mention metropolitans as church officials.³² Gregory quotes the decision rendered by a metropolitan of Auvergne³³ in a case between two bishops who were disputing, and at another time he speaks of a certain Bertram, who was metropolitan of Bordeaux.³⁴ But these instances can be counted on one hand, and are very few in comparison with the endless narration of the deeds of the bishops. In the age of Gregory, the bishop was the preëminent church official.

In the transitional sixth century, when the Empire in the west was breaking down, and the Roman political system failing, the organization of the church was the only unit of strength and of culture. It was only natural that the bishop should gradually take the place of the Roman town and city officials. In him were combined the duties of many magistrates. His help was sought constantly by the sick. When he went from the

32. Tardif, p. 127.

33. H. F., VI, p. 358.

34. Ibid., VIII, p. 428.

church, people would throw themselves at his feet,³⁵ women brought children for him to bless, and the faithful were satisfied if they might touch the hem of his garment.³⁶ When he entered the Atrium of the church, the weary sufferers would reach out to beg a touch of his hand, or a sign of the cross made by him, on the afflicted part. In times of plague, when all who could fled from the stricken city -- it was the bishop who stayed to pray God for release. The Bishop in St. Victor's Church by intercession night and day, saved the people of Marseilles from that dread plague brought in by ship from Spain.³⁷ And the holy Gall of Clermont saved his city from a like disaster.³⁸ When disease broke out in Auvergne, Bishop Cato was faithful to the last, tending to the sick and poor, celebrating mass and burying the dead.³⁹ Worn out

35. Glor. Mart., 80.

36. Glor. Conf., 59.

37. H. F. IX, p. 37.

38. Ibid., III, p. 156.

39. Ibid., IV, p. 188.

and weary with his tasks, the bishop died among the people whom he served. And there was the story of Mamertus, Bishop of Vienne, who had prayed while fire was raging in the palace, and all the city was threatened. The townspeople frantically were rushing through the streets, the flames were spreading; but Mamertus stayed before his altar, beseeching God to spare the city. And his great faith delivered them, for the rain came from the heavens, and their homes were saved.⁴⁰ To get some conception of how these bishops were beloved let us turn to the death-bed scene of Sidonius Apollinaris.⁴¹ He is surrounded by a multitude of wailing men, women and children. Gregory with good intuition and imagination, gives us the words of these mourners. "Do not leave us, good father, we will be orphans. What will our life be after you are dead? Who will give us advice? Who will inspire us?"

And the bishop was often a force for righteousness and justice in his lawless, violent community. In many

40. H. F., II, p. 99.

41. Ibid., p. 81.

cases he was really a self-appointed public officer to watch the morals of his people.⁴² It was the priest who forced the fierce Rauching to uncover the slaves, whom he had buried alive.⁴³ When the angry crowd wished to stone the impious Jew who had attempted to stop the white clad Easter procession, it was the voice of the Bishop Avitus that protested and saved the wretch.⁴⁴ Pelagius of Tours, who robbed and murdered, and was not afraid of any judge, whom neither threats nor gentle words affected, was finally humbled by the bishop's excommunication.⁴⁵ When Parthenius was in danger, because of the heavy tributes he had laid upon the Franks, he sought protection, not from any town officials, but from two prominent bishops,⁴⁶ These he begged to quiet the sedition of the frenzied people, and to conduct him in safety back to Treves. The bishop's voice was used to calm the tumult in the seething streets.

42. Seresia, p. 96.

43. H. F., V, p. 222.

44. Ibid., p. 233.

45. Ibid., VIII, p. 472.

46. Ibid., III, p. 150.

It was the one restraining force. And when the bishop wanted to impose his will for righteousness upon the people of his flock, a miracle was always found at hand. And stories went from town to town -- kings heard them as well as whispering peasants in the streets -- and all believed. Everyone knew about the impious peasant who went out to work in the fields on the Sabbath day, when he should have been at mass.⁴⁷ The ax with which he tried to repair his plough, stuck to his hand for ten long years! Now, there was a moral to that tale! And bishops who were faithful to their vows watched not only their parishioners but also their own priests. Each bishop exercised disciplinary power over the clergy of his diocese. Thus Ragemond, Bishop of Paris, excommunicates Theodulf, the drunken priest;⁴⁸ and Gregory orders the treacherous Rioult to a monastery prison.⁴⁹ And it is hinted that the bishops could punish

47. Mir. S. Julien, 11.

48. H. F., X, p. 106.

49. Ibid., V, p. 301.

with rods.⁵⁰

The bishop's power extended over the Jews and the heretics of the community. They, too, at times, considered what he had to say. The most interesting example of this is seen in the experience of Bishop Avitus, of Clermont.⁵¹ He had long argued with individual Jews; he had exhorted them to see in Christ the promised one of whom David and the prophets spoke. There was much friction in the city between the Christians and the Jews, property had been damaged and retaliation was the cry. Avitus decided to take a firm stand. He proclaimed that all the Jews must be baptised, confess the Trinity, or leave the city. It was a bold plan! But the bishop put it through. By the hundreds the eager Jews came flocking to the Cathedral steps, imploring for the sacred rites. The good bishop, weeping for joy, baptised them with the holy water, received them in the sacred precincts of the church. The city was wild with enthusiasm; the alien race had been won over. But the more honest Jews sadly packed up their belongings and emigrated to Marseilles. The Bishop had

50. Seresia, p. 67.

51. H. F., V., pp. 233-234.

triumphed.

This unique position of the Gallic bishop as father of his people, as dictator in the community, was due largely to the dense ignorance and superstition of the time, which lent an unusual prestige to the church and its officials. But his authority was also due to the fact that, as head of his diocese, he controlled the property of the church,⁵² and his management was not submitted to any outside control.⁵³ And many saintly prelates felt it their duty to become guardians of the treasure of the church.⁵⁴ Caesarius of Arles looked upon this responsibility as being quite compatible with a churchman's spiritual offices; but he warned against the development of too much worldliness.⁵⁵ He feared the growth of excess temporal power. And it is quite evident that in sixth century Gaul the patrimony of the church was rapidly accumulating. The ruling of the Emperor Constantine which recognized the church as a civil person that might inherit property,⁵⁶

52. H. F., V, p. 227.

53. Seresia, p. 93.

54. Lesne, Histoire de la propriete ecclesiastique, p. 454.

55. Ibid., p. 454.

56. Seresia, p. 76, note 3.

is the beginning of the vast accumulation of church goods and lands. This edict of the fourth century provided the foundation for the great patrimony of the medieval Roman Church. In Gregory's time the movement is under way. By the fifth rule of the council of Orleans in 511, it had been decreed that bishops should leave all their property to their church;⁵⁷ and the generous gifts of Merovingian Kings, and the offerings of the faithful every year were slowly adding to the treasures of the church.⁵⁸ By the end of the sixth century, the church at Tours possessed considerable estates,⁵⁹ and it was, by this time, an accepted tradition that the bishop would control one third of his parish revenues.⁶⁰ The bishop was thus often the greatest land owner in his diocese,⁶¹ with serfs and slaves under his control. Gregory, in his history, gives us instances of this. He tells us that the church had mills which were controlled on their estates.⁶²

57. *Seresia*, p. 77, note 1.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

60. *Hatch*, p. 54.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

62. *H. F.*, VII, p. 398.

When Chrodinus died he left his fields and cultivators of the soil to the neighboring bishop,⁶³ when Bishop Remi died he willed eleven doloni to the church.⁶⁴ The abundant wealth which the bishop represented was perhaps, the chief cause of much violent competition that arose over the question of succession to the episcopate.⁶⁵ To unscrupulous men the position paid well. They liked the power that it gave. Did not Cato, before he was confirmed as bishop, hasten to take charge of all church property, remove the superintendents, cast lesser officials out, and regulate everything himself.⁶⁶ And we have evidence that the church, as a whole, was eager to enjoy a larger patrimony. It was becoming conscious of its temporal power. It was legislating to advance its landed interests. What better example could be given than the ruling of the second Lyons council of 567,⁶⁷ which decreed the penalty of excommunication upon those who so far despised their

63. H. F., VI, p. 333.

64. Seresia, p. 92, note 1.

65. H. F., IV, p. 191.

66. Ibid., IV, p. 155.

67. Hatch, p. 65.

souls, as to endeavor to retain what their relatives had bequeathed to the servants of God, and to the poor. There was shrewd practical, business sense behind this warning of the bishops. And the king who understood this situation best, and who lamented it, was the Chilperic, whom, as we have seen, Gregory reviled. Chilperic bemoans the sad state of his kingdom: "Behold our treasury has remained poor, our wealth has gone to the churches -- no one reigns if not the bishops."⁶⁸

Now canon law proclaimed that the bishop was the dispenser of the revenues of the church;⁶⁹ and in Gaul, where the bishops were very numerous and powerful,⁷⁰ the disbursement was largely a matter of personal inclination.⁷¹ When Bishop Quintianus was driven out of his city of Rodez, because they said he favored Franks, he fled for aid to Lyons,⁷² and there, Gregory tells us, he was warmly met by

68. H. F., VI, p. 371.

69. Seresia, p. 92.

70. Flick, p. 351.

71. Leane, p. 334.

72. H. F., II, p. 101.

Eufraſius, who took him in, and gave him houſes and vineyards, ſaying generously, "the wealth of this church is enough for us both." And when Biſhop Aetherius of Liſieux, gave fields and lands to a diſſolute prieſt,⁷³ whom he hoped to help thereby, Gregory commends him highly for this charitable gift. Occasionally, one hears definite proteſt againſt the greed of certain city biſhops. At the council of Carpentras in 527,⁷⁴ it was decreed, that the city biſhop -- who had legal control over the gifts made to the country church -- ſhould take from that ſum only the amount that he really needed, and ſhould leave a generous ſurplus for repairs and for the local clergy. This ruling reflects, of courſe, the greed of certain individual biſhops, but in general, the community did ſhare in the revenues of the church. Gregory often called the church property, the goods of the poor.⁷⁵ With eccleſiaſtical money captives were ransomed, ruined

73. H. F. VI, p. 253.

74. Hatch, p. 53.

75. Seresia, p. 92.

citizens were helped, the poor were given food and clothing. The poor in every parish were inscribed on the rolls, and the bishop had permanent charge of all such, and of widows and orphans, and all lepers.⁷⁶

When evils of invasion, war, anarchy, famine and fire came, the revenues of the bishop were stretched to include and help all needy.⁷⁷ In its original conception, the temporal power of the church was a religious and charitable institution of high order.

Another proof of the importance of the bishops in Gaul is seen in the fact that they were often the companions of the Merovingian Kings. They displayed an easy familiarity with these Frankish rulers. We read often of bishops dining with kings;⁷⁸ King Gunthram seeks out Gregory in his lodging;⁷⁹ Bishop Bertram of Bordeaux is related to the royal line.⁸⁰ And it was only natural that the Frankish monarchs

76. Lesne, p. 456.

77. Ibid., p. 457.

78. H. F., VIII, pp. 427, 433.

79. Ibid., p. 427.

80. Ibid., p. 428.

should make use of these bishops who, by their superior training, were best fitted to share in the duties of the state. When the Bretons were cruelly ravaging the fields near Nantes, destroying the crops and vineyards, carrying off much booty and many captives, it is Bishop Felix who is sent out against them, and they promised to desist.⁸¹ And when Queen Brunhilda wishes to communicate with Spain she sends as her ambassador Bishop Elafius of Chalons.⁸² King Childebert sends Bishop Egidius with other envoys to King Gunthram, and when they arrive, it is the bishop who addresses the king and delivers the royal message.⁸³ And at another time Egidius stands in the presence of King Chilperic.⁸⁴ When King Childebert went to meet his uncle, King Gunthram, he went accompanied by his mother, wife, and sister, and also by Bishop Magneric of Treves.⁸⁵

81. H. F., V. p. 267.

82. Ibid., p. 281.

83. Ibid., VII, p. 386.

84. Ibid., VI, p. 343.

85. Ibid., IX, p. 13.

The bishops of sixth century Gaul were men of great importance. Land owners of vast wealth they were, and besides these material benefits, they had tremendous spiritual possibilities which, sometimes, they capitalized. Protectors of the poor and weak, they were friends also of the mighty kings.

VI

The Relation between Church and State.

We have been discussing the important position held by the Gallic prelate in the sixth century, and now we wish to consider his relation with the Frankish monarch. We have seen that, often, he was on terms of easy familiarity with Frankish Kings, but just what was the basis of this intercourse. What was the relation between king and bishop, between state and church in Gaul? These early Merovingian kings had a real sense of their own importance. King Clothar I, seized with a fever while hunting in the forest of Cuise, reveals, on his death bed, his shocking megalomania. "Alas, what do you think the king of Heaven is like, when he kills such great kings in this way?"¹ Is it any wonder that such kings ruled their subjects and their bishops with an iron hand! From the time of Clovis on, the Frankish kings kept control of the bishops and the abbots.² Clovis himself bestowed the bishoprics and Frankish kings were formidable adversaries of the canon law. There was practically no limit to the exercise of royal power over

1. H. F., IV, p. 175.

2. La Garde, p. 348.

the ecclesiastic,³ as Gregory himself confessed when he reproved king Chilperic, "If anyone of us, O! King, exceeds the limits of justice, you can punish him; but if you transcend the right, who shall restrain you?" The church, indeed, had no easy task in trying to extend its control over these untamed Merovingian kings. They knew few restraining forces. The process of education was slow.⁴

The bishops of Gaul were subjects of the Merovingian kings, and rendered them great respect.⁵ They enjoyed much independence, in their own particular sphere,⁶ but they knew it rested largely on royal favor, so, on the whole, the church was ever ready to glorify the kings of France.⁷ It is rather significant as proof of this loyalty to the state that the church considered as very serious the crime of treason. Bishop Egidius at his trial before King Gunthram said, "I know I am worthy of death, because of the crime of treason."⁸ The crimes of murder and adultery

3. Lea, Studies in Church History, p. 79.

4. Holmes, p. 512.

5. Junghans, Histoire critique des regnes de Childerich at de Chlodovech, p. 133.

6. Ibid., p. 137.

7. Ibid., p. 133.

8. H. F., X, p. 123.

could be atoned for, in the church; but for treason against the State the bishop was deposed and imprisoned.⁹ For all clergy took the oath of allegiance to the Frankish kings.¹⁰

And it is true that the church owed a great deal to the generosity of the Frankish monarchs.¹¹ Did not Clovis build the church of the Holy Apostles in Paris;¹² and Clothar and Sigibert erect the church of Saint Medard at Soissons;¹³ and Childebert raised the beautiful structure of the church of Saint Vincent?¹⁴ And when this same Childebert came back from a successful expedition into Spain, he brought many treasures, chalices and golden caskets, and precious stones;¹⁵ and all of these he generously distributed among the churches and basilicas, and consecrated them for divine use and service. Indeed,

9. H. F. V, p. 265.

10. Krueger, p. 278.

11. Tardif, p. 146.

12. H. F., II. p. 110.

13. Ibid, IV, p. 173.

14. Ibid.

15. H. F., III, p. 123.

this king seems to have left a record for lavish giving.¹⁶
 And Clothar I generously endowed the nunnery of Saint
 Croix, founded at Poitiers by the Blessed Radegonde.¹⁷
 And whenever he came to Tours, he always brought many
 gifts, remembering the shrine of the Blessed Martin.¹⁸
 We shall not stop to discuss the motives which inspired
 these gifts -- forgiveness of sins, desire for material
 gains, prosperity or peace, the promise of eternal life.¹⁹
 We merely make the point that Merovingian monarchs,
 especially Clovis and his sons,²⁰ were loyal supporters
 of the Frankish church. The bishops of Gaul found their
 princes powerful protectors, and generous benefactors.²¹

The national character of the Gallic church is shown
 in the fact that it was the Frankish king who summoned the
 councils.²² With very few exceptions, these are national,

16. Lesne, p. 158.

17. H. F., IX, p. 69.

18. Ibid., IV, p. 175.

19. Lesne, p. 170.

20. Ibid., p. 159.

21. Tardif, p. 145.

22. Holmes, p. 513.

rather than ecclesiastical synods.²³ They are concerned with the needs of the newly developing state, and show little interest in Christendom.²⁴ In other words, church affairs are merged with the broader national problems of the growing state. The Frankish monarchs summon the Gallie bishops, not primarily to a religious synod, but to a political conference. And not infrequently the canons that were adopted were published directly by order of the king.²⁵ The fact that the king claimed the right of convoking the ecclesiastical assemblies and of confirming their decisions, is of the greatest importance²⁶ It asserts the kingly prerogative over the church.

Gregory, in his history, reflects this condition. He tells us that king Childebert had ordered all the bishops to a council²⁷ at Metz; but the weather was

23. Holmes, p. 513.

24. Ibid..

25. Ibid..

26. Junghans, p. 138.

27. H. F., X, p. 120.

terrible, it had rained for days, the rivers were swollen, travel was dangerous, yet in spite of all the difficulties, the clergy set out on the journey; for as Gregory explains, "bishops dared not resist the orders of the king."

When Bishop Praetextatus' period of exile was over, he could not return to his town, until he had been received by King Gunthram and admitted to his table.²⁸ Royal reconciliation seemed absolutely necessary. When the bishops deposed Emeri, because he had not been elected according to the canons, King Charibert retaliated, by restoring him, and by sending certain officers of the treasury to fine the guilty bishops.²⁹ Bishop Leontius paid one thousand gold pieces!

But in spite of this very evident royal authority, Gregory gives examples often of the bishops insubordination. When King Clothar ordered the church to pay one third of its revenues to him,³⁰ Bishop Injuriosus of Tours scorned the command in such haughty fashion that the King in haste

28. H. F., VII, p. 389.

29. Ibid., IV, p. 179.

30. Ibid., p. 152.

and trembling sent many gifts to the tomb of the Blessed Martin. When King Chilperic ordered Gregory to force Merovech from the church in Tours where he had sought protection, and if he did not, threatened to burn all the country side, Gregory firmly wrote back, "it is impossible to do in Christian times, what had not been done in times of heretics."³¹ Nisetus, Bishop of Treves dared to excommunicate his lord King Clothar.³² And King Charibert was, too, cut off from the sacraments of the church, because he would not give up the nun Marcovefa, whom he had secretly married.³³ King Chilperic was fond of dabbling in theology, and when he got into an argument with Gregory over an interpretation of the Trinity, asserting that it was unseemly to call God a person, Gregory incurred his wrath, by saying boldly, "He would be a fool, who would adopt what you propose."³⁴ Then there is the example of Bishop Leudovald of Bayeux.

31. H. F. V, p. 236.

32. V. P. XVII, 2.

33. H. F. IV, p. 180.

34. Ibid., V, p. 289.

who defied the wicked Fredegunda by closing all the church doors of Rouen, until the murderers of Praetextatus, whom she had aided, were brought to justice.³⁵ And Gregory stands boldly forth at the council of Paris where he defends Bishop Praetextatus against the claims of Chilperic,³⁶ and he defies Leudast, ruler of Tours, in refusing to deliver Gunthram-Boso who had taken shelter at the shrine of the Blessed Martin.³⁷

A number of times Gregory quotes the warnings given to certain kings by zealous bishops. They spoke their minds very freely. But Gregory remarks, "We bishops speak to you, but you listen only if you wish."³⁸ Gregory particularly detested the civil wars that plagued the nation of the Franks though the struggles against the heathen in Clovis' day he thought were justifiable. He writes, "would that you, too, O kings, were engaged in battles like those of your fathers, who crushed wicked

35. H. E., VIII, p. 463.

36. Ibid., V, p. 245.

37. Ibid., p. 239.

38. Ibid., p. 248.

peoples and subdued their lands, and left to you unchallenged dominion! What is your object in fighting? What do you seek after?³⁹ One thing you lack; without peace you have not the grace of God. And, kings, if civil war gives you pleasure, govern that impulse, and serve your chief, who is Christ." Bishop Avitus advises King Gundobad to confess his faith in the Trinity before his people. "You are head of your people, leader in battle; let them know the truth about your faith."⁴⁰ This same Bishop also warned Chlodomer, "if you look to God and amend your counsel, God will be with you, and you shall go in and win the victory."⁴¹ But the king would not change his plans, and so was slain in battle. Sometimes, however, the proud Merovingians would hesitate before the words of the priest. Clothar, upon the rebuke of the bishops,⁴² gives up his mistress, Vuldetrade to

39. H. F. V pp. 217, 218.

40. Ibid., II, pp. 97, 98.

41. Ibid., III, pp. 117, 118.

42. Ibid., IV, p. 159.

Duke Garivald. The wicked Chilperic, bold and courageous in intrigue and murder, yet fears to enter Paris (by which he is breaking a treaty with his brothers) unless preceded in his journey by a great host of sacred relics.⁴³ For underneath all the bluster and the bravery and the cruelty, there was a weak spot of superstition in most Merovingian hearts. And this was powerful enough to dissuade them, at times. They realized that, in spite of their authority over the bishops, yet it was the priesthood that had powers, almost supernatural, over them. The vengeance of the church might be delayed, but was inevitable. Was there not the case of the proud and insolent Roccoleus who was struck down by God;⁴⁴ and Chlodomer slain in battle, because he would not take the advice of the Bishop Avitus.⁴⁵ Tales such as these made even a lusty Frankish monarch stop and reconsider -- but not always. Yet this seems the only check there was, slight though

43. H. F., VI, p. 339.

44. Ibid., V, pp. 224, 225.

45. Ibid., III, p. 118.

it be, upon the power of the Merovingian Kings. They would defy the bishops, bring them to trial, summon them to councils, dictate church canons, but, in times of panic, they would humbly hasten to lay senseless, lavish gifts upon the holy altar.

VII

The Organization of the Gallic Church

In its organization the Gallic church of the sixth century, reflects the general disorder and confusion of the period. One would not expect to find in chaotic, transitional Gaul a thoroughly organized and centralized system of church government. The highest authority of the Frankish church was the national council, which met quite irregularly, was frequently poorly attended, and possessed little real power.¹ These synods, as already noted,² were called by order of the Merovingian monarchs, and were, therefore primarily political rather than ecclesiastic in their deliberations. For example, the council of Carpentras in 527, seems to have been merely the ordinary yearly synod of the province of Arles,³ and passed only one canon, and that in regard to a local church matter.

1. Krueger, I, p. 280.

2. Supra, Chap. VI, note 22.

3. Holmes, p. 42 514.

And these councils were not truly representative bodies. It appears that only bishops, or their representatives, and metropolitans were present. The council of Orleans, 511, was attended by twenty-seven bishops and five metropolitans;⁴ and the second council of Macon (585) was attended by forty-three bishops, twenty representatives of bishops, and two bishops without sees.⁵ Fifty-four of these church councils were held in Gaul in the sixth century;⁶ and in spite of the fact that they were more or less dependent on the Frankish monarchs, yet, we can see, from the decrees of these national synods, how zealously the churchmen were striving to resist the heathenism and worldliness that prevailed.⁷

The metropolitan, as a church official, was gradually losing his position in Gaul. At the council of Orleans, (511) five metropolitans were present; none are recorded at the council of Macon (585).⁸ By the seventh century this title disappears.⁹ The chief officer

4. Seresia, p. 99, note 1.

5. Holmes, p. 518.

6. Dudder, Gregory the Great, II, p. 54.

7. Holmes, p. 519.

8. Supra, chap. VII, note 5.

9. Krueger, I, p. 280.

of the church was the bishop, whose important position in the life of the community, we have already discussed.¹⁰ Among the clergy of the bishop's church, the archdeacon was the most important.¹¹ He was the bishop's chief assistant and supervised the subordinate clergy.¹² Christianity originally developed in the towns and cities, where the governing classes and their dependents formed the nucleus of the growing faith.¹³ The city bishop, naturally, was the centre of this system, and his power was conceived to extend over all the country within the district.¹⁴ In the west there were few bishops outside the cities.¹⁵ But as Christianity spread from the towns, along the roads, out into the country side, new questions arose in regard to the

10. Supra, V.

11. Krueger, I, p. 280.

12. Catholic Encyclopedia, I, p. 693.

13. Hatch, Growth of Church Institutions, p. 10.

14. Ibid., p. 14.

15. Ibid., p. 23.

founding, sustaining and governing of churches in rural communities. This movement of expansion was of steady and spontaneous growth.¹⁶ By the beginning of the sixth century, the parish system seems to have been established.¹⁷ At the end of the sixth century Bishop Aunarius of Auxerre informs Pope Pelagius that new churches abound in his region.¹⁸

These churches beyond the city limits were often founded by missionary bishops, by members of the senatorial aristocracy and perhaps even by groups of humble, pious country folk.¹⁹ Caesarius of Arles writes of the churches he consecrated and visited,²⁰ and in this statement suggests a close connection between the mother church of the city or town, and the rural parishes. Sometimes, a simple oratory was built at the tomb of a saint, in the country as well as in the city; and later this may have developed into the more dignified basilica.²¹ Rural churches were often built exclusively to honor a saint, or receive his

16. Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales dans l'ancienne France," Revue Historique, LX, (1896), p. 243.

17. Ibid., p. 242.

18. Lesne, p. 59.

19. Imbart de la Tour, op Cit., pp. 260-261.

20. Ibid., p. 242.

21. Lesne, p. 58.

precious dust.²² As these various basilicas and churches spread thro the country communities, and often were far removed from the bishops seat, it was impossible for the bishop to maintain strict supervision of the new organizations. By a gradual evolution these parish churches became distinctly separated from the mother-church.²³ The right of the rural church to receive gifts of land and money and serfs was recognized by the council of Orleans in 511,²⁴ and this financial independence was accompanied also by certain concessions of power and privilege. By the end of the sixth century the arch priest was the superior of the rural parochial priests; he might conduct divine service and even, perhaps, baptise new converts.²⁵ According to the council of Tours (567), where mention is first made of this official, he was given supervision over his brother priests, and if they refused to accept a

22. Lesne, p. 58.

23. Ibid., p. 61.

24. Ibid., p. 62.

25. Krueger, I, p. 280.

26. Imbart de la Tour, "Les paroisses rurales dans l'ancienne France," Revue Historique, LXI, (1896) p. 25.

necessary reprimand, he had the unpleasant duty of punishing them. And so, it appears with the rise of the office of arch priest, that the hierarchy, formerly only connected with the city churches, was establishing itself in the rural communities.²⁷ At first, the bishop attempted to control, somewhat, these rural clergy, as seen in the council of Tarracon (516) where it was required that all parish officials should present themselves to the bishop, at the mother church, every Saturday evening.²⁸ But, at the end of the sixth century, when the expansion of the church had been rapid, it was impossible to tell what parish churches were connected still with the centre of authority in the diocese, and what churches were absolutely independent.²⁹ And we have proof that the city bishops often oppressed the parochial clergy,³⁰ and that they in turn resisted

27. Imbart, de la Tour, op. cit., p. 25.

28. Hatch, The Organization of the Early Christian Churches, p.203.

29. Leane, p. 68.

30. Dudden, II, p. 53.

to the utmost, and formed conspiracies against their superiors, as seen in the council of Orleans in 638.

We see that in the sixth century the Church in Gaul was making a futile struggle for centralization. But the growing independence of the parish church with its comfortable patrimony was not the only menace to church unity. Perhaps, the greatest problem was that of the church built by private persons on their own lands, and which was considered as private property.³² This custom of erecting private chapels on an estate was recognized by a law of Honorius, (598).³³ The practice grew and spread gradually. Veritable little religious colonies grew up where seigns and master worshipped at the same shrine.³⁴ The officiating clergy were nominated, paid, and perchance dismissed by the owner of the estate on which they served.³⁵ There was no possible connection

31. Dudden, II, p. 64. Note 1.

32. Hatch, The Growth of Christian Institutions, p. 50.

33. Imbart, de la Tour, Revue Historique, LX, (1896) p. 258.

34. Imbart, de la Tour, op. cit., p. 258.

35. Hatch, op. cit., p. 25.

between the neighboring bishop and these lay proprietors. The private church was an individual concern; and that the owner sometimes, had not erected his church purely for spiritual uplift, may be seen in a decree of the council of Braga in Spain (572) which suggests that churches built in order that the founder may share in the public offerings are not to be consecrated by the bishops.³⁶ That this problem was faced in Gaul, also, is seen in the letter of Pope Gregory to Felix of Messina, in which the pope expressly denies to the owner any right in the church except the right of admission -- which is due to all Christians.³⁷

As a result of this loose system of Church erection and lax method of supervision, a large number of pseudo-priests were wandering through the country side. They had no connection with the accepted orthodox hierarchy of

36. Hatch, op. cit., p. 51.

37. Ibid.

clergy; they were neither ordained by, nor bound to the bishop. Gregory of Tours, occasionally, mentions the arrival of an itinerant impostor. Now it is the man from Bourges who works strange miracles by diabolic power.³⁸ Or else it is the false Desiderius who boasts an intimate relationship with Peter and with Paul;³⁹ or that other famous hypocrite who journeyed from the Spains in his robe of fine stuff, carrying aloft a great cross, from which hung many little bottles of the sacred oil⁴⁰ No wonder that the wide-eyed country folk flocked after him!

And the confusion of this Gallic church is still further seen in the monastery life of the time. In the sixth century Gaul was full of monasteries.⁴¹ The council of Orleans in 511, had decreed that the bishop had supervision over the monasteries of his diocese, and

38. H. F., X, p. 129.

39. Ibid., IX, p. 4.

40. Ibid., IX, p. 5.

41. Dudden, II. p. 78.

that none could be established there without his consent.⁴² But in spite of this ostensible episcopal jurisdiction, which the bishops often abused,⁴³ the monasteries of Gaul lacked coördination and systematic regulation. Each cloister was a little world in itself. The greatest diversity in monastic life and discipline prevailed.⁴⁴ There was an absence of any final and acknowledged universal authority. The monastic life of this period was confused, ill regulated and unstable.⁴⁵

Again, we realize the serious struggle that the Gallic church was making in the sixth century. It is the conflict between congregational independence and the centralized episcopal supervision. And the victory of centralization over independence comes only when the national Gallic church permits itself to be merged with the great centre of ecclesiastical authority in Rome.

42. Lesne, p. 125.

43. Ibid.

44. Dudden, II, p. 78.

45. Ibid.

VIII

The Social Service of the Church.

The Church was the great center of community life in Gaul of the sixth century. When times were perilous, justice uncertain, accurate knowledge of scientific healing unknown, the church had a broad and varied field of activity. The fugitives, the halt, the lame, the blind found shelter in the shadow of the church. There mercy was granted to the criminals; there miraculous cures were wrought. In an age of violence and brutality, the bishops and the holy altar often were the only source of justice and humanity.

Gregory of Tours, above all things, emphasizes the curative powers of the church. He tells us that the clergy knew and practised the art of healing.¹ They understood the use of certain herbs and common remedies, and, at any rate, could calm the conscience, appease the fears, give consolation. But, more than that, they could work wondrous miracles. Gregory assures us that it is through the man of great

1. Marignan, La medecine dans l'eglise au sixieme siecle, p. 16.

holiness that God shows his power.² The more noble and pure a man is, the more power has he to work cures. Is there not the case of the archdeacon of Lyons, known for his saintliness, who goes to Rome to cure the daughter of the Emperor Leo. He fasts and prays three days, then, at his touch, the maid is whole again.³ And the Blessed Martin who, with a kiss, restores the unclean leper.⁴ Then, there is Julian, the monk of Randan, who eats little food, and plagues his body with a rough, hair shirt.⁵ His holy life gives him great healing powers. And Bishop Domnolus of Mans, attained such holiness that he restores the lame and blind.⁶ And Saint Hilarius of Poitiers is said by many to have raised the dead.⁷ Gregory assures us that many priests and bishops

2. H. F., VI, p. 317.

3. Glor. Conf., 63.

4. H. F., VIII, p. 466.

5. Ibid., IV, p. 188.

6. Ibid., VI, p. 320.

7. Ibid., I, p. 29.

wrought miracles of healing in life, and also after death.⁸ And the curative powers of the living clergy did not exceed the mysterious efficacy of the relics of the sainted dead. At the tomb of Saint Lupianus in Retz, paralytics could walk, the dumb speak, the blind see.⁹ The same great powers are attributed to Remmius' shrine.¹⁰ Even the oil in the lamp that hangs over the sepulchre of Saint Nicetius can bring back vision to unseeing eyes.¹¹ The grated stone, from a saint's tomb, if powdered fine, makes a healing draught.¹² In fact, this remedy was so highly recommended, that many famous tombs were deeply perforated.¹³ The water and the wine which had served to wash an altar were carefully guarded by the priests, and given out to those

8. *Seresia*, p. 50.

9. *Glor. Conf.*, 54.

10. *Ibid.*, 66.

11. *H. F.*, IV, p. 193.

12. *Virt. S. Mart.*, II, 51, 1.

13. *Glor. Conf.*, 36.

in need.¹⁴ The very cloth upon the sainted tomb, when kissed, could stop a hemorrhage.¹⁵ The faithful carried fragments of its holy fringe, and placed them on infected spots.¹⁶ The holy spittle of the Blessed Lupicin was cherished in the cracks where it had fallen. It could work wondrous cures.¹⁷ Any object formerly used by a saint had miraculous powers.¹⁸ If he had been a bishop, his cross had magic in its touch, and uplifted, could chase off pursuing demons. Toothache was cured by the application of the leaves¹⁹ from a grove where some saint had spent his quiet summer days. Candles from some shrine were taken to the bedside of a feverish patient;²⁰ they burned throughout the night; the precious wick was scraped, and when mixed with water, made a healing, soothing beverage.

14. Marignan, p. 18.

15. Virt S. Mart., II, 10.

16. Ibid., IV, 1.

17. V. P., VIII, 2.

18. Ibid., VII, 5.

19. Glor. Conf., 10.

20. Virt. S. Mart., II, 3.

But usually the sick one was obliged to go to the church, and there keep vigil.²¹ Even when king Chilperic's son was near to death, they placed him on a litter, and hastened to the church of Saint Medard in Soissons.²² For those who came to the shrine were more certain of the blessing. On festal days, the little retreat was filled with flowers, and was lighted by the tapers of the faithful.²³ Pilgrims crowd in, with holy curiosity, and there the sick ones linger. The poor are there, to beg an alms for Christ's sweet sake.²⁴ It is a motley throng. Some kneel in groups, and some apart; yet all are muttering prayers and whispering favorite texts of scripture. They seek success in some affair, perhaps abundant harvests, or release from pain and cure in illness. For the sick, the sojourn is unlimited. For some diseases they stay many years; for others, one day will suffice.²⁵

21. Glor. Mort., 31.

22. H. F., V., p. 272.

23. Marignan, p. 7.

24. Virt S. Mart., I, 40.

25. Marignan, p. 10.

A mute stayed six months before the cure was made.²⁶
 A blind woman lingered on for many days.²⁷ In fever cases sudden cures were possible, apparent returns to health very common. For fever was a malady peculiarly adapted to the wonders of miracle workings.²⁸ Mere rest and abstinence would make the cure. But the faithful gave all credit to the church, for did it not control the powerful curative agencies; the sacred oil, the sacred dust, the holy altar cloth? Man lived surrounded by tremendous supernatural forces that only the church could appease and understand. So, on the fete days, in throngs they crowd. In breathless silence, they hear again the story of the saint's life; they hear the list of healing miracles announced;²⁹ they pray and sing and give forth thanks.³⁰

But, at night fall, the crowd is gone, the church

26. Virt. S. Mart., III, 54.

27. Ibid., II, 8.

28. Marignan, p. 10.

29. V. P., VIII, 6.

30. Marignan, p. 10.

is closed, and silence settles down upon the tomb. Only the sick are left for their long vigil of the night. Fatigued by the excitement of the day, and weak with fasting and tremulous with hope, they wait in patience for the mystic presence of the saint. Some fall asleep upon the floor, their tapers drooping from their weary hands; some mumble still their prayers; some work themselves into a state of ecstacy.³¹ The slightest sound reverberating through the gloom beyond the candle-light, might be mistaken for the sainted voice; or in a feverish dream, one thinks the very hosts of heaven sing. To some, in that long night, the vision comes. They hear the words of comfort; they see, through tired eyes, the sweet face of the saint. He gives to them the mystic eucharist; he leads them in the mystic mass. It is enough. The weary watcher is relaxed; in sleep he finds new strength. When morning comes, he tells his neighbor of the saint's white beard, and how his clothes shone like the snow.³²

31. Virt S. Mart., II, 33.

32. Mir. S. Julien, 9.

Not only was the church a shelter for the sick, but it also was an asylum for the fugitive. That this right of asylum was recognized as a definite part of the work of the church, may be seen in an edict of the council of Orleans (511)³³ which gave the church the legal right of offering protection, and in the fact that this right was reiterated many times later.³⁴ In the violent sixth century it was necessary that there be a place of refuge for the abused slave, and for the mistreated citizen. Often the guilty sought shelter as well as the innocent; the humble townsman came and the haughty Queen Fredegunda.³⁵ All classes and all conditions of men took advantage of this place of safety. At one time Caesarius of Arles complained that, in the church, there were too many hangers on, that the porticoes were filled with useless chatterings

33. Seresia, p. 70, note 1.

34. Holmes, pp. 532, 518.

35. H. F., VII, p. 378.

and quarrelings.³⁶ And, indeed, the fugitives and their friends, if they were important individuals, might cause considerable uproar. Gregory of Tours gives us the case of the notorious Eberulf, who fled from the wrath of king Gunthram, to the church of the Blessed Martin.³⁷ There he established himself in the audience chamber of the holy church, and Gregory testifies that "he was running faithfully on the errands of the fugitive"³⁸, supplying him with all the necessities, and many luxuries. But Eberulf was never satisfied, and complained constantly, and threatened vengeance later, if he regained the king's favor. Eberulf had no respect for the bishop or the church, He often became violent within the portico; he threw down a priest and beat him almost to death, when he refused to bring more wine. His sacrilegious friends came visiting, and handled with irreverant fingers the ornaments of the

36. Lesne, p. 197.

37. H. F., VII, p. 392.

38. Ibid., p. 393.

holy tomb.³⁹ And when the priest attempted to lock up the sacred shrine, Eberulf roughly broke into the evening service, attacked and cursed the bishop. He was so generally obnoxious and noisy that the vesper hymns were stopped, and the worshippers went home.⁴⁰ This picture gives us an excellent example of the way a prominent fugitive might take cruel advantage of the church's hospitality and protection, by outraging the priests and bishops, and by completely disorganizing the services of the church. And Gregory gives us other instances of vicious men who claimed right of asylum at the altar of the Lord. There is the cruel Ursus who fled to the church of St. Julian⁴¹ after setting on fire the house where his enemy, Andarchius and seven slaves were sleeping in a drunken stupor. And the case of Gunthram-Baso, the murderer of Theodobert, who rushed to the church of St. Martin at Tours.⁴² Although king

39. H. F., VII, p. 393.

40. Ibid., p. 394.

41. H. F., IV, p. 209.

42. Ibid., V, p. 223.

Chilperic sent orders that the criminal should be dragged from the church, (but) Gregory bravely sent answer that what the king asked to be done, had not been done "from ancient time," and that the holy church could not now be violated by such a breach of faith.⁴³

But it was not only vicious criminals who threw themselves upon the mercy of the church. Gregory gives us the case of Merovech who, contrary to divine law and the canons, married his uncles' widow.⁴⁴ In fear of the father, King Chilperic, the unhappy lovers hastened to find consolation and protection in the church. The two slaves, also, who had married stealthily, fled from the wrath of their master, the wicked Rauching⁴⁵ and begged the blessing and help of the neighboring bishop. In such ways/^{did} the church furnish comfort and relief.

43. H. F., V, p. 224.

44. H. F., V, p. 220.

45. Ibid., p. 221.

But the church of the sixth century was not only a haven for the poor and the sick, a refuge for the fugitive, it was also an important centre for the preservation of a literary and pedagogical tradition.⁴⁶ By the first part of the fifth century the famous imperial schools had begun to disappear,⁴⁷ and as the barbarian invasions advanced the life and culture of the Roman municipia were disrupted. The sole surviving agencies of education were the schools connected with the church.⁴⁸ Intellectual activity, a taste for the classics cannot be found in the civil society of that transitional century. There seems to be no document of good standing that proves the existence of a school of belles lettres in the palace of the Merovingians. Historical critics do not believe that such a school existed at this time.⁴⁹

46. Kurth, II., p. 119.

47. Roger, L'enseignement des lettres classiques. p. 153.

48. Mullinger, Schools of Charles the Great, p. 32.

49. Vacandard, "La Scuola du palais Merovingien,"

Rev. des Questions Historiques, 76, p. 553.

And the church schools reflect this lack of interest in the classical studies. Among the documents relating to monastery methods of instruction, few allusions to the liberal arts are found.⁵⁰ The attitude of Caesarius of Arles on this subject has already been noted.⁵¹ The chronicles of Lerins reveal a curriculum that includes grammar and rhetoric, but Alliez, the historian of that famous monastery, declares that the chronicle is of little real value historically.⁵² It is more than likely that Lerins had not changed its attitude toward the pagan writings since the time of Caesarius, and emphasized still at the end of the century training merely in religious discipline and saintliness. That Lerins was slow to accept reform measures is seen in the fact that in the seventh century when Saint Aigulf tried to introduce some changes, (in the seventh century) he was taken to a desert place and there the irate monks cut out his

50. Roger, p. 162.

51. Chap. I, note 31.

52. Roger, p. 162.

tongue.⁵³ The men who held positions in the Gallic Church of the sixth century, received, on the whole, only a religious education.⁵⁴ It seemed that the clergy had need only of a knowledge of reading and writing, and ability to chant the psalms.⁵⁵ Their reading was confined largely to the scriptures, and the Lives of the Fathers.⁵⁶ The great Latin and Greek masterpieces were almost completely ignored; and Gaul, which in the late Empire period, had produced famous scholars and Rhetors, lapsed, under the influence of the barbarian inroads, into decadence and intellectual sloth.

The fact to be emphasized, however, is that what little culture there was in Gaul, emanated from the monastery and cathedral schools, and of these two, the former undoubtedly included the more extended range of instruction.⁵⁷ The monastery in the early sixth century was still a lay institution, and not subject to the

53. Wilde, A. S., "Decadence of Learning in Gaul in seventh and eighth centuries." American Journal of Theology, Vol VII, p. 444.

54. Roger, p. 167.

55. Ibid., p. 168.

56. Ibid.

57. Mullinger, p. 32.

control of the bishop, and it is a striking fact that in the Lives of the Fathers while many youths are spoken of as attending school, very few bishops or abbots are declared to be teachers or patrons of learning.⁵⁸ But we have direct proof, however, that certain bishops were interested in education, for Gregory of Tours, as has been noted,⁵⁹ owed all his training to Bishop Callus, and Bishop Avitus; and although his interest was chiefly ecclesiastic, yet from these tutors he received an appreciation of the poet Virgil. He was acquainted, at least, with the first eight books of the Aeneid.⁶⁰ No doubt, Gregory, and his training apart from the monastery school, is an exception. On the whole, the monastery schools were the centres of culture, and the transcription of manuscripts was recognized, at that early date, as being a definite part of the work of the institution.⁶¹

58. Wilde, p. 451.

59. Chap II, note 14.

60. Murth, I., p. 21.

61. Mullinger, p. 32.

But the monks working quietly and monotonously in the scriptoria were copying only religious texts. No transcribing of the classical authors can be assigned to this period.⁶² Yet the art of transcribing was being preserved, and the spirit and tradition of learning kept alive. A complete discussion of the origin and spread of monasteries through Gaul in the sixth century, is beyond the limits of this thesis, but it is interesting to note that the monastic system, though perhaps, alien to the genius of French character, was making rapid headway in southern Gaul. At least two hundred and forty such institutions had developed by the end of the sixth century.⁶³ And these monasteries enjoyed the protection and patronage of kings, and the service of the most intelligent men of the time.⁶⁴ Critize them, as we may, for their narrow outlook, their ecclesiastic bias, yet the fact remains that the church schools

62. Roger, p. 168.

63. Mullinger, p. 30.

64. Wilde, "Les ecoles du palais aux temps Merovingiennes,"

Rev des questions historiques, Vol 74, p. 555.

preserved a form of learning, that made possible the Frankish renaissance of the ninth century.⁶⁵

65. Wilde, op cit., p. 556.

IX

The Moral Tone of the Gallic Church.

Our discussion of the moral tone of the Gallic church may be introduced by some of the contemporary comments made upon it by discerning churchmen. Salvian of Marseilles, in the fifth century, addressed the clergy of his day in the famous work Ad Ecclesiam.¹ In it, he denounced particularly the greed of his age, and tried to turn men's thoughts toward the treasure which all Christians have in heaven, and with which they should console themselves. He especially exhorts his fellow workers to be an example to their flocks, and to give up levity. "What hope can there be for the people when in the church itself most diligent search can scarce discover one chaste soul among so many thousands."² Caesarius of Arles, in the early sixth century, speaks very plainly of the moral decadence of the times,³ and,

1. Holmes, p. 388.

2. Leo, Sacerdotal Celibacy., I, p. 85.

3. Watkins, History of Penance, II, p. 750.

according to his biographers, had sermons written to apply to every kind of crime and vice.⁴ The fact that he was so eager to impose the austerities of monasticism upon the clergy of Gaul⁵ and select them only from the monasteries of his province, is rather good proof that he did not approve of the existing system of training, and of the clergy it produced. Pope Pelagius II, (580) in explaining his rather unusual nomination to the diaconate of a clerk, who a widower lived openly with a concubine, tried to justify such a selection by an apology based on the degeneracy of his age.⁶ Pope Gregory, the Great, not willing to plead the immoralities of the times as an excuse for clerical misbehavior, openly entreats Queen Brunhilda to exercise her power in restraining the still unbridled license of the Frankish clergy.⁷ And St. Columban, the celtic monk who came to make his monastery home in Gaul, earnestly desires to see Pope Gregory in Rome, that they may confer together upon the

4. Holmes, p. 508.

5. Holmes, p. 500.

6. Leo., op. cit., p. 136.

7. Ibid., p. 138.

sins of the clergy and the bishops in France.⁸ Even the missionary Boniface, in the early eighth century, is still criticizing the Frankish clergy!⁹ They evidently have not mended their ways. He is insparing in his denunciations of their depravity, and found association with them so abhorrent that he writes to Pope Gregory II, asking if he should continue to eat with them, or even to speak with them.

These comments, we see, are not restricted alone to the sixth century Gaul. Salvian, in the fifth century had lamented the deplorable state of the clergy, and Boniface, the apostle to the Germans, is making the same complaint three hundred years later. It may be fair to conclude, from this testimony, that the clergy of sixth century Gaul were not the only trespassers. Perhaps we have come to look upon them as the chief offenders, because of the very frank statements made by Gregory, bishop of Tours. If we had such a detailed account of the seventh and eighth centuries as we find in Gregory's

8. Holmes, p. 557.

9. Sperry, Clerical Celibacy in Western Europe, p. 18.

History of the Franks, we might find that there was the same wide spread prevailing laxity. But unfortunately, the period from the sixth through the eighth centuries, with its fast advancing eclipse of culture and learning, produced very few writers.¹⁰ Gregory gives us conditions in the latter part of the sixth century: if he had lived earlier or later, the story might perhaps have been just the same.

Before we consider Gregory's discussion of the matter and his attitude toward the situation, it seems necessary to make a few general statements in regard to the age in which Gregory was writing. In an ignorant, violent and lawless age, one could not expect to find a cultured and highly spiritualized priesthood. In an age when conversions were made en masse and were due largely to an emotional and superstitious appeal, one could not expect to find a lofty type of Christian

10. Fisher, p. 128.

manhood. The transition was often too sudden, and too superficial. The converted barbarians found in Christianity not that inner light which spiritualizes, but rather a magic Shibboleth to bring them success in external, material things. And the clergy, needing the support of these barbarians in the struggle with paganism and Arianism in western Europe, compromised, more or less, with the new standards and interpretations. In fact, the very priesthood of the Catholic Church is later to be recruited from the Teuton tribes. Gradually, the hierarchy is to be filled by a class of warrior bishops who are usually successful in maintaining ecclesiastical prerogatives, but not always certain to promote the reputation of their order by the rigidity of their virtue.¹¹ These clergy, with lower standards than those preached by Caesarius of Arles, crowd into the livings of the church. They have not the education, or the purity, or the zeal of the early fathers. They are often merely makeshifts. The church was growing

11. Leo, op. cit., p. 131.

fast in Gaul in the sixth century, the ranks of the clergy must be replenished, and more priests were needed. At the council of Arles in 524 it was stated that the number of the churches had so increased that it was necessary to ordain many new clergy¹² and these recruits represent largely, no doubt, recent converts from the faith of Thor and Odin.

Gregory of Tours in his History of the Franks speaks very plainly of the scandalous actions of the Gallic clergy. We have already discussed Gregory's respect and awe for the bishops of the church, and that may account for the fact that when he is telling us of some misdeed, he will sometimes hesitate in the narrative, and throw in a word of apology. When he is speaking of the unjust bishops, who tried to flatter King Chilperic, he adds, "it is painful to say it of bishops."¹³ In his indignation against Bishop Felix,

12. Lesne, p. 59.

13. H. F., V, p. 247.

whom he denounces as greedy and boastful, he remarks, "but I shall pass over these matters."¹⁴ When he discusses Pappolus, Archdeacon of Autun, he writes, "he committed a great number of iniquities that we will pass over in silence -- for we do not want to appear to be detractors of our brothers."¹⁵ We may judge, from this attitude of Gregory, that he is not going to exaggerate the failings of the bishops; he will not tell us everything, for he does not want to appear to criticize his fellow workers. We may assume, therefore, that what he does narrate is told in sincerity and truth, for Gregory has the reputation of being a credulous but truthful chronicler.¹⁶

We get an astounding picture of Bishop Caucinus. Gregory says he was guilty of every crime and unworthy to hold the office. On taking up his duties of bishop, he became so addicted to wine that he was loathed by all.¹⁷ He was often so befuddled by drink that four

14. H. F., V, p. 225.

15. Ibid., p. 228.

16. Fisher, p. 129.

17. H. F., IV, p. 161.

men could hardly take him away after dinner. In his greed and avarice, he plundered the goods of the strong and the weak. When the priest Anastasius refused to surrender certain documents, the bishop ordered the wretched clerk to be starved to death.¹⁸ Gregory concludes his characterization of Cautinus by saying that he had no holiness, no quality worthy of esteem.¹⁹ He had no knowledge of letters, sacred or secular. In Cautinus we get an excellent example of the warrior-bishop, the clergy recruited from barbarian ranks -- "those who for their bellies' sake, creep and intrude, and climb into the fold."

Drunkenness appears to have been a rather common vice among the bishops.²⁰ Eonius, Bishop of Vannes, makes himself hideous in his orgies of drink.²¹ Then there is Bishop Drootigisil who goes insane from excessive drinking;²² and Bishop Gonthaire of Tours who becomes often so intoxicated²³ that he does not

18. H. F., IV, p. 162.

19. Ibid., pp. 163, 164.

20. Seresia, p. 40.

21. H. F., V, p. 281.

22. Ibid., IX, p. 54.

23. Ibid., X, p. 148.

recognize his own well-known companions at the table. The notorious bishops Salunius and Sagittarius, Gregory tells us, generally spent the night in feasting and drinking, so that, at dawn, when the clergy were singing the matins in the church, these two libertines were calling for cups, and drinking wine.²⁴ "There was no mention at all of God," Gregory remarks, "No services were observed." When morning came they would wrap themselves in soft coverings, and buried in drunken sleep they would lie till the third hour of the day. The dinner at King Gunthram's table gives us another shocking picture of the lax morals of the time. Quite a group of clergy are gathered there, enjoying royal food and favor. Bishop Palladius and Bertram, the metropolitan of Bordeaux, grow angry with each other, they raise their voices in violent abuse, they excitedly reproach one another with many adulteries and perjuries as well.²⁵ We shrink from this unpleasant dinner-party. But the noise and violence of the scene did not affect

24. H. F., V, p. 260.

25. Ibid., VIII, p. 433.

the sturdy Frankish appetites. Gregory tells us, "at these matters, many laughed," yet, he adds, "a number who were keener of perception lamented that the weeds of the devil should so flourish among the bishops of the Lord."²⁶

And there are other evidences that prove many of these church leaders to be lawless, reckless, desperate men. Bishop Egidius was connected with the plot to murder king Childebert;²⁷ and it was common talk that Bishop Fronton had poisoned the fish which his predecessor ate for dinner.²⁸ Bishop Melantius was so anxious to bring about the death of Praetextatus, that he gave stealthy gifts of silver to the murderers.²⁹ Bishop Bodegesile, of Mans, robbed his people, cheated them, and in the courts there was no justice for the helpless victims.³⁰

26. H. E., VIII, p. 433.

27. Ibid., X, p. 121.

28. Ibid., V, p. 274.

29. Ibid., VIII, p. 473.

30. Ibid., p. 471.

Bishop Lampadius took church property by fraud, plundered the goods of the rich, stole even from the poor, took possession of lands and vineyards and slaves that he coveted.³¹ Felix, Bishop of Nantes, is accused by Gregory of being avaricious, and desiring to control certain estates of the church.³² and Bishop Bertrand of Bordeaux once made a bishop of a merchant, hoping, thereby to gain his wealth.³³ And the wicked Bishop Priscus, with his wife Suzanne, through hatred and jealousy, persecuted cruelly the followers of the Blessed Nicetius.³⁴

The fact that Priscus had a wife Suzanne brings up the question of celibacy in the Gallic church. Was marriage forbidden to the clergy? Was celibacy the accepted rule? We will see in our study of the relation between the Papacy and the Gallic church, that

31. H. F., V, p. 229.

32. Ibid., p. 225.

33. Seresia, p. 41.

34. H. F., IV, p. 193.

in the middle of the sixth century, there was practically no connection between them. The church in Gaul was developing along its own national lines, and the authority of the Roman Bishop was not felt beyond the Alps. So any rulings of the Roman church in regard to celibacy would not be particularly binding upon the church of Gregory's day, and yet we find in both the Roman and the Gallic church a tendency working towards celibacy. The council of Nicea had frowned upon the theory,³⁵ and at the council of Gangra in 362 anathema was declared upon all those who refused to accept the sacrament from married priests.³⁶ But by the year 385 we have a change in policy; the first definite church canon on the subject appears. Siricius, Bishop of Rome, decrees for the western church, that all ordained clergy shall cease conjugal relations.³⁷ Although not demanded by law, yet the custom of

35. Sperry, p. 5.

36. Ibid.

37. Leo, op cit., vol I., p. 62.

nominating for bishop only those were celibate, started in the fifth century,³⁸ and the code of Justinian, in the middle of the sixth century prohibits the ordination of anyone to the episcopacy who has children or grandchildren.³⁹ Thus, it appears that the rule of the west was more strict than that of the east. This ruling of the east plainly reveals a worldly expediency. A bishop with heirs to inherit property is not a desirable member of the order. Perhaps, the church has grown to think of celibacy as an economic rather than an ethical problem; the ecclesiastic must be bound to the church, all worldly ties severed, primarily that there may be no dissipation of church property. Or, it may be, that the monastic ideal has triumphed at last. But whatever the motive in enforcing celibacy, we find that it is a question before the church quite constantly. This delicate subject was brought up in every church council held in Gaul until the eighth century.⁴⁰ Schemes, threats and ingenious devices were resorted to, in the desperate hope of compelling

38. Sperry, p. 13.

39. Ibid.

40. Leo, op. cit., p. 83.

obedience to these rules. The constant spying and supervision all prove the hopelessness of the task. The perpetual legislation has little effect. For example the council of Tours (567) decreed that whenever a priest entered his house he should be accompanied by at least one of his clerical subordinates.⁴¹ This monitor was to remain with him, constantly. If the bishop had a wife she must be regarded as a sister, and must have a distinct establishment,⁴² and the bishop who had no wife was not to have any women in his household. On no account were they to receive visits from strange women, i.e. those not related to them. And into their houses they could receive only their mothers or sisters or their wives from whom they had separated and who were prepared to live as sisters with them.⁴³ The council of Naeon, (581) decreed that no woman should be permitted to enter the bed-chamber of a bishop unless two priests or deacons were present.⁴⁴ That it was found necessary to introduce such a system of espionage,

41. Sperry, p. 15.

42. Holmes, p. 519.

43. Ibid., p. 520.

44. Sperry, p. 16.

and that this delicate matter should have been so often discussed in church councils, ^{PROVE} ~~from~~ that celibacy was very difficult to enforce, and that it was a matter upon which the Gallic churchmen felt the necessity of legislating. The Gallic church, as a whole, had accepted the rule of celibacy for its clergy.⁴⁵

Gregory of Tours, without question, believed in this law of absolute continence. He tells with much feeling of the bishop, who, according to the canons, put away the wife whom he had loved;⁴⁶ and how upon his breast, at night, the lamb of God was seen to rest. The miraculous radiance confirmed the divine approval. Among the virtues of the saints it is chastity that he admires most.⁴⁷ He described Bishop Avitus as a man of great holiness, practicing complete chastity, which God demands.⁴⁸ And Bishop Nicetius, too, a leader in all good works, whose life was chaste.⁴⁹ He tells how God

45. Holmes, p. 519.

46. Glor. Conf., 78.

47. Monod, p. 139.

48. H. F., IV, p. 193.

49. Ibid.

gave to Bishop Simplicius the glory of chastity and saintliness.⁵⁰ He shows his deep admiration for the Blessed Monegonde, who, upon the death of his two children, gave up his wife, in order that he might devote himself more completely to the life of meditation, and of prayer.⁵¹ And Gregory thinks it was by inspiration of God that Venant came to Tours, fell under the influence of the monastery near St. Martin's shrine, and consequently renounced his parents and the girl whom he had loved.⁵² The touching legend of the two lovers who preserved their chastity through life, and whose tombs afterward were miraculously united, was so dear to Gregory that he repeated it twice.⁵³

We see then that the church councils of Gaul and Gregory of Tours agree on this question of absolute continence. And Gregory, very frankly, tells us of

50. Glor Conf., 76.

51. V. P., XIX, 1.

52. Ibid., XVI, 1.

53. H. E., I, p. 35; Glor. Conf., 32.

churchmen who failed to live up to the high standards of personal purity. Charges of adultery were made against Bertrand, metropolitan of Bordeaux,⁵⁴ against the Abbot Dagulfus,⁵⁵ against Salunius, bishop of Embrun, and Sagittarius, bishop of Gap.⁵⁶ Gregory bitterly criticized Suzanne, wife of Bishop Priscus, because she had entered the household of the clergy, and had access to the cells where priests were sleeping; and he explains further that this had not been done before, as the preceding bishops had observed the rule for a long time.⁵⁷ That the Gallic church in the sixth century, and many of its leaders were attempting to establish the rule of celibacy is very certain, but the ill success of their labors may be seen from a letter which Boniface, in the eighth century, wrote to Egbert, Archbishop of York.⁵⁸ He declared that he was compelled to restore adulterous priests to their positions, because, if all the guilty ones were punished with excommunication, as

54. H. F., V, p. 292.

55. Ibid., VIII, p. 448.

56. Ibid., V, p. 257.

57. Ibid., IV., p. 194.

58. Sperry, p. 18.

the canons commanded, there would be no one to administer baptism or perform other rites of the church.

We come to the conclusion, after reading Gregory's History of the Franks that though there were high standards set by Gallic councils, and by many saintly bishops, yet there was a great deal of corruption and immorality in the church so lately won from barbarism. One of the striking evidences of the low moral tone of the sixth century churchmen is their absolute inability to control the actions of the church members. In Gregory's history we find a total absence of a penitential system; yet crimes of every kind abound. Homicide is rampant, yet there is no attempt to exact penance. The church reveals in this lack of discipline, its own weakness and lack of moral stamina. The barbarous Franks have not been tamed because the Merovingian church is inefficient; the crimes of the community are not expiated because spiritual leadership is wanting.

Why should a bishop exact penance for a deed similar to one he may have committed? The fact that the church does not demand full expiation is merely a proof of its own lack of insight and of fine moral distinctions. The murders instigated and actually accomplished by Clovis and Clothar go unreprieved. No churchman raises a reproachful voice. There is no Bishop Ambrose to rise up and challenge deeds of cruelty. The public penance practised in the fourth and fifth centuries has quite disappeared. The rigor and severity of its rules have proved repellent; few are willing to accept them; and gradually the call to public penance comes to be almost entirely ignored.⁵⁹

And though the church of this period is most remiss in reproofing and punishing offenders, and though there is no organized system of penance, yet all through the History of the Franks one feels that Gregory believes the principle of divine intervention is working. The inefficient, undisciplined Merovingian church leaves all punishment to the mercy of God. Every real misdeed

59. Watkins, II, p. 563.

brings down the wrath of heaven. The judgment of God will punish the wicked and reward the good. Gregory is eloquent with examples of this miraculous retribution. There is the case of the notorious Sigivald, Duke of Auvergne, who was a destroyer of church property, and no human power seemed able to restrain him.⁶⁰ Finally, when he attempted to seize the domain left to the basilica of St. Julian by the Blessed Tetradius, he was struck by God, and completely lost his reason.⁶¹ Then there is the case of Roccolemus, who was attempting to force Gunthram-Boso from the church where he was taking refuge. God intervened. The impious one became saffron "with the King's disease" and was laid low. And there is prince Chramnus, whom Gregory says did many things contrary to reason, and for his evil deeds, his departure from the world was hastened.⁶² And even the priest is not safe from the wrath of heaven. There is that colorful tale of the Bishop Epachius, of Riom, who, on

60. H. F., III, p. 134.

61. Ibid., V, p. 224.

62. Ibid., IV, p. 168.

the festival of Christmas eve about to celebrate the holy mysteries, drank too deeply of his wine, and then dared to approach the Lord's table, where only those who fast may come. Breaking the eucharist by altar candle light, he gave it to his kneeling humble flock. He put the cup to his own lips, then struck by an avenging God, he fell a shrieking, foaming epileptic.⁶³ This dependence upon divine retribution is seen throughout the writings of Gregory. The churchmen do not seriously take up the question of punishment and penance in the sixth century. In Frankish territory penitential discipline was in a state of total neglect.⁶⁴ And although it would have been very difficult to enforce discipline among people of such unbridled passions, yet this situation plainly reflects a lack on the part of the church itself; its leaders do not uphold, in authoritative fashion, the highest moral standards.

The church in Gaul, in the sixth century, represents a certain amount of pagan influence. Although the

63. Glor Mart., 87.

64. McNeill, The Celtic Penitentials, p. 150.

official cult of paganism was abolished under the immediate successors of Clovis, and from the sixth century, pagan priests were no longer seen, yet there is proof that the idolatrous cults maintained themselves in the country up until the middle of the seventh century.⁶⁵ The converts were not always isolated individuals, but often represented important groups of worshippers.⁶⁶ The various cults consisted not only of simple practices of superstition, such as the famous sermon of Saint Eloi enumerates,⁶⁷ but also of formal acts of idolatrous worship, addressed to the Greek and Roman Gods; Jupiter, Mercury, Diana and Venus.⁶⁸ Temples and idols dedicated to these gods were found especially localized in northern Gaul, in the region between the Seine and the Somme and the dioceses of Terouanne and Tournai.⁶⁹ It was only

65. Vacandard, "L'Idolatrie en Gaule," Revue des questions historiques, LXV, (1899) p. 453.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., p. 445.

68. Ibid., p. 454.

69. Ibid.

natural that many of the newly converted christians of Gaul should go back occasionally to their former gods, and the council of Clichy (626) attests to the presence of pagans in the christian communities.⁷⁰ In fact, many of the church councils of the sixth century testify to the problem of having pagans, with their idolatrous practises living in close proximity to the faithful. The councils of Orleans (541); Eluse (551); Tours (567); Auxerre (573) all treat of this matter.⁷¹ The council of Clichy, (626) notes that pagans sacrifice victims to their idols, and that christians, living nearby, often take part in these services.⁷²

Caesarius of Arles, in the early sixth century, had preached against the sin of worshipping idols⁷³ and Pope Gregory I, at the end of the century, wrote to Queen Brunhilda, cautioning her against this evil.

70. Vacandard, p. 454.

71 Ibid., p. 429.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid., p. 435.

He warns her that her subjects must submit to the teachings and practises of the church, no longer sacrifice to idols, worship trees, or display in public the heads of animals burned upon heathen altars.⁷⁴ If Pope Gregory wrote thus, at the end of the century, it is fair to suppose that the problem of idolatry was before the Gallic church all through the sixth century.

Gregory of Tours in his History of the Franks, occasionally mentions the pagans. He tells us that Saint Gall once went to Cologne with King Theoderic, and while there, he saw the pagan temple where the barbarians sacrificed, and gorged themselves with food and wine. He set fire to the impious structure, and was chased and almost slain by the enraged idolaters.⁷⁵ And there is the story of the christian, devoted to the worship of Saint Nicetius, who embarked for Italy with a company of pagans.⁷⁶ When the storm broke upon their

74. Vacandard, p. 431.

75. V. P., VI, 2.

76. Ibid., XVII, 5.

ship, they cried in haste to Jupiter and Mercury; the christian warned them that they were praying to demons, and Gregory tells us that when they sought aid from the God of Nicetius, they were saved. The most interesting reference to pagan worship is given in connection with the life-story of the deacon Vulfilas. When he came to the territory of Treves, he built a monastery on a neighboring mountain, and there he found an image of Diana, after preaching to the people and telling them that Diana was nothing, and that the songs that they sang were disgraceful, he finally converted them; and by miraculous power, the tremendous statue of Diana was overthrown.⁷⁷ Although the references of Gregory to the pagans are not very numerous, they are sufficient to prove that there was in Gaul, in the sixth century, a struggle between the forces of the church and heathenism,

77. H. E., VIII, p. 442.

and the presence of these idolaters was apt to influence the growth of the new christian converts.

At the end of the sixth century, there was introduced into Gaul a strong force for righteousness in the work of Saint Columban and his band of Celtic monks. It is impossible to give here an adequate estimate of the influence of these missionaries upon the Frankish church, but, one thing is very certain: they introduced a new system of penance, to be privately performed, having no part in the ceremonies of the church and receiving private reconciliation at the hand of the priest, instead of the bishop.⁷⁸ And without question, the rapid spread of the institution of Celtic penance through Gaul had a spiritualizing influence. It is fair to suppose that the moral tone of Gaul would be somewhat improved by this wide spread system of private penance. By means of it, the church got a stronger hold upon the individual.

In passing, it is interesting to note that Gregory of Tours seems to ignore the presence of these Celtic monks in Gaul. St. Columban must have come before the

78. Watkins, II, pp. 621-2.

year 575,⁷⁹ and so, he labored for two decades not very far away from Gregory. And the patron of both these men was Sigibert, king of Austrasia.⁸⁰ The synods of Gaul were constantly trying to bring the Irish monk within the Frankish ecclesiastical organization,⁸¹ and it seems that a prominent bishop like Gregory would have been interested in this problem. But the writer has found no direct mention of Saint Columban or his work. Two slight references, however, might be noted. Gregory relates the miracle of the harvest field protected from the storm by the prayers of a pious monk.⁸² Is he referring, here, to the similar miracle which Jonas accredits to his master Columban?⁸³ And again, Gregory may be suggesting the Easter controversey with the Celtic church when he mentions casually that "our city and many others celebrated Easter on April 25th; but that others kept it on March 25th," as they did in Spain.⁸⁴

79. Holmes, p. 542. Note 1.

80. Ibid., p. 542. Monod, p. 31.

81. Holmes, p. 554.

82. H. F., IV, p. 190.

83. Holmes, p. 547.

84. H. F., V, p. 243.

X

The Relation between the Gallic Church and the Papacy.

From the reading of Gregory's History of the Franks, one gets the impression that there was little or no contact between Gaul and the Papacy during the second half of the sixth century. About the middle of the preceding century by imperial edict of Valentinian III, it had been decreed that the Bishop of Rome was the supreme head of the western church, and resistance to the authority of the Roman Bishop was affirmed to be an offense against the Roman state.¹ No bishops in Gaul could undertake anything without the consent of the Papa urbis aeternae. But by the close of the fifth century the Roman empire in the west had ceased to exist and its imperial edicts no longer commanded obedience. The barbarian invasions of Gaul had driven out the Roman legions, and disrupted the life of the Roman municipia. The province had undergone a cataclysmic change. To the conquering Franks, tradition of papal supremacy meant no more than traditions of Roman law and culture.

1. Robinson, Readings in European History, I, p. 72.

The church at Arles had been, for nearly a hundred years, of metropolitan rank, and that it had been in a close connection with Rome is seen in the many letters that have come down to us from this period.² In fact, the archbishoprics of Vienne and Arles had been created by the power of Rome. All that remained of Roman life in Gaul and Spain centred in Arles,³ and to this political pre-eminence, Constantius and his favorite Patroclus, attempted to add an ecclesiastical importance, by making the Bishop of the city a kind of lieutenant-general of the Roman pontiff in the transalpine regions.⁴ But, though these efforts failed after the death of Bishop Zosimus, yet the Bishop of Arles exercised an unusual authority in the district adjoining his see. Even though the pontifical vicariate failed, Arles became an ecclesiastical centre of the greatest importance.⁵ And the bishops of Arles often went with their problems and complaints to consult the Bishop of Rome.⁶

2. Holmes, p. 494.

3. Duchesne, Early History of the Christian Church, p. 407.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

By all the traditions of a century Arles was peculiarly allied to the city of Rome.

In the beginning of the sixth century Rome still kept a hold on Southern Gaul through the archbishoprics of Vienne and Arles, for Septimania and Provence had not fallen into the hands of the Franks,⁷ and the kingdom of Burgundy was yet merely tributary.⁸ The archbishopric of Arles was held by the famous Gallo-Roman monk, Caesarius. Through Caesarius, the Roman bishops still hoped to communicate their will to the officials of the Gallic church,⁹ and it is quite certain that the decisions of the councils of Arles were sent to Rome at least for the information of the Roman pontiff.¹⁰ That Caesarius was equally anxious to preserve the close connection with Rome is seen in certain decisions of the council of Vaison over which he presided. There was a definite plan to introduce into the Gallic service certain Roman methods

7. Oman, p. 64.

8. Ibid., p. 115.

9. Holmes, p. 514.

10. Ibid.

of procedure -- the repeating of the Kyrie Eleison frequently, the Ter Sanctus in the mass, and the use of the second portion of the Gloria.¹¹ And not only must the Gallic service resemble the Roman more closely, but the very name of the Pope was to be inscribed in the canon and read aloud at mass. These little details, unimportant in themselves reveal a desire on the part of the Archbishop Caesarius to keep his church in vital contact with the centre of authority in Rome.

And Caesarius was in constant communication with Rome. We know that he made, at least one trip thither. When he was summoned to Ravenna to see Theodoric, the great Ostro-Goth, Pope Symmachus invited him to visit the eternal city, and so he journeyed on to Rome where he was welcomed by nearly all the people of the city, the Senate and the nobles, the Pope and his clergy.¹² Symmachus then confirmed his rights as metropolitan,¹³

11. Holmes, p. 514.

12. Ibid., p. 499.

13. Ibid., p. 500.

decorated him with the pallium and permitted the deacons of Arles the privilege of wearing the dalmatic as did the deacons of Rome. It was, in every way, a most successful visit. But on one point Caesarius and Symmachus could never agree. The Bishop of Arles was primarily a monk¹⁴ and his belief in the austerities of the monastic rule, and his utter disregard of the temporalities of his see, made him quite a problem to the mother church in Rome.¹⁵ But the Pope maintained the upper hand. After Caesarius had returned from Italy, he received a rather pointed dispatch from the Pope, enjoining him not to alienate the goods of the church, not to make bishops out of laymen, i.e. men who were only monks and had had no training in ecclesiastical duties.¹⁶

But the popes desired not only to dictate to the archbishops of Arles, they hoped through them to control the church in Gaul. From Arles -- the old centre of Roman

14. Holmes, p. 490.

15. Ibid., p. 494.

16. Ibid., p. 500.

life and tradition they planned to rule the Merovingian church. In 514 Caesarius had been given oversight of Gaul and Spain,¹⁷ and during the first half of the sixth century Vigilius and Pelagius I, each, in turn, pronounced the archbishops of Arles as vicars of the Apostolic Church in the west.¹⁸ But that the entire Gallic church did not recognize this supremacy of Southern Gaul is seen in the fact that the archbishop of Arles was only once, in the century, accepted as president of the national synod.¹⁹

It is quite evident, that though there was a close connection between Arles and Rome, yet during the greater part of the sixth century, the church in Gaul was organizing itself quite apart from the jurisdiction of Rome. There was no special antagonism to Rome, but there was complete independence. The councils of the church became strictly national synods,²⁰ and are concerned far more with the interests of the

17. Holmes, p. 515.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 516.

20. Ibid., p. 513.

newly developing Frankish state, than with the problems of the church. They are summoned by Frankish monarchs and not infrequently the canons that were passed were published by order of the monarch.²¹ The Merovingian rulers had fought their way through Gaul and as conquerors they gave allegiance to no one; they recognized no superior power. The subtle, spiritual influence of the Bishops of Rome over the minds of the Frankish kings was something that had to be created more gradually.

Gregory's History of the Franks reflects this very condition, when the power of the papacy had waned quite completely in Gaul. From the middle of the sixth century, up until the time of Pope Gregory (590) there was almost no connection between Rome and Gaul. In all the ten books very few references are made to contemporary Popes. When Gregory gives the list of bishops of Tours at the end of his work, he mentions the Pope, just once in connection

21. Holmes, p. 513.

with the episcopal elections. The Pope sent Gatien the first bishop to Tours.²²

There are, however, two striking appeals made to Rome by certain bishops. There is the instance of Bricius, driven out by the citizens of Tours, because of his adulteries. After staying with the Pope at Rome for seven years, Bricius was declared innocent by him, and reinstated.²³ Another example of appeal with similar clemency rendered, is the case of the Bishops Salunius and Sagittarius, notorious churchmen accused of robbery, adultery and murder by the synod at Lyons.²⁴ But, they too, take advantage of the decree of the council of Sardica and appeal their case to Pope John. He pardons them, and orders King Gunthram to reinstate them, which the latter hastily proceeds to do.²⁵ It is interesting to note that these two appeals to Rome were made by men thoroughly discredited

22. H. F., X, p. 140.

23. Ibid.

24. H. F., V, p. 257.

25. Ibid.

in their own communities, and although Gregory makes no comment on the papal decree, the injustice of the verdict is quite apparent. In Gregory's day there was not that constant communication between Rome and Gaul that existed earlier in the century, between Arles and the Papacy.

King Charibert brought in the name of the Pope in a suggestive way. He was angry with the bishops who had deposed Emeri, chosen by his father, the late King Clothar.²⁶ They had sent their newly elected candidate, Heraclius, to the king, and he entered the royal presence declaiming: "Hail Glorious King, the Apostolic See sends to your eminence the most abundant greetings." But the king, incensed by the defiant attitude of the bishops, replied, "you have n't been at Rome, have you, to bring us the greeting of the Pope?" This answer suggests that the indignant king is growing satiric. He is touching on a delicate subject. It would appear that the Gallic bishops felt that their

26. H. F., IV, p. 179.

greeting was the same as the greeting of the apostolic see; that they recognized no superior authority. The independent Gallic churchmen were feeling their own importance. King Charibert, disgusted with their impudence, in subtle fashion suggests that a greeting from the apostolic see could only come from Rome. This incident is interesting to us in that it is another evidence of the fact that the Gallic churchmen of the later sixth century were quite complacently developing their church system independently of Rome. They did not recognize its superior authority.

We have seen that only very rarely does Gregory mention a pope, and only occasionally, the city of Rome. He tells us that certain bishops are sent to Rome to get sacred relics of the blessed apostles and the saints.²⁷ He refers to Rome as the place (as the place) where the stone is preserved²⁸ that bears the impress of

27. H. F., VI, p. 313; V. P. VIII, 6.

28. Glor Mart., 28.

the knees of the praying apostles. Bishop Aravatus of Tongres, we are told, prays constantly for the deliverance of Gaul from the Hunnish invasion, and in order that his prayer may be more efficacious he goes to Rome that he may more fervently pray at the tombs of the Holy Apostles.²⁹

To sum up this evidence, it seems that Gregory of Tours, on the whole reflects little connection between the Gallic church and papal authority -- only at one time does he give an instance of anyone's obeying a papal decree, and that is the case of a king, and not a bishop.³⁰ Rome, as a city, is important not because it is the centre of ecclesiastic authority, but rather because it is the great centre for the distribution of relics -- the city made sacred by the bones of the blessed apostles.

In the last decade of the sixth century the Gallic church, however, does come again into closer relation with Rome. This new connection is largely due to the

29. H. F., II, p. 53.

30. H. F., V, p. 257.

personal influence of the new Pope Gregory I. After having quite completely ignored the papacy, throughout the nine volumes, Gregory of Tours devotes considerable space in the beginning of the tenth book to the Pope Gregory. He gives in detail the speech which he delivered in Rome upon the occasion of his election to the high office.³¹ In no other part of the history do we find such consideration and interest shown to any pope. And this fact is very significant, for after half a century of complete separation, now, under Pope Gregory I, the papacy is asserting its power in Gaul. And the appeal of this new prelate is largely a spiritual one.³² From a life of ascetic seclusion he had been called, much against his will, to one office after another, until, at last, he occupied the chair of St. Peter.³³ Although not a learned man, yet he had qualities of earnestness and religious piety, his ideals

31. H. F., X, pp. 77-81.

32. Holmes, p. 537.

33. Fisher, p. 157.

were lofty, his standards for the church preëminently high. By the fame of his personal sanctity, by his writings and his conversion of England, Gregory did a great deal to advance ecclesiastical authority. He did everything to maintain, strengthen and extend what he regarded as the just claim of the papacy.³⁴ We are particularly interested in his influence upon Gaul. Gregory assumed actual jurisdiction over the western church.³⁵ The few estates in Southern Gaul, which belonged to the Roman patrimony, though not of much value in themselves, were the object of considerable attention on the part of Gregory. They offered him a means of getting into closer communication with the Frankish kingdom.³⁶

We have abundant evidence of Pope Gregory's interest in Gaul -- in the numerous letters that have come down to us,³⁷ letters in regard to the Roman patrimony, those written in preparation for the passage

34. Dudden, Gregory the Great, I, p. 475.

35. Holmes, p. 539.

36. Spearing, The Patrimony of the Roman Church, p. 14.

37. Holmes, p. 537.

of Augustine and his monks, through Gaul to England, and those which especially bear upon the church in Gaul, and show the temporary recovery of some of that influence which the Roman bishops had formerly wielded. It is this last type of letter that makes us realize the new condition in the relations with the papacy. Gregory I writes to the bishops of Arles and Marseilles deploring the forcible baptism of Jews.³⁸ He endeavors to win the friendship of King Childebert II by addressing him in complimentary fashion, and by offering him the gift of a key of St. Peter's. He sends relics of St. Paul to Queen Brunhilda, and the Pallium is presented to Bishop Syagrius of Autun.³⁹ Gregory is most anxious to extend his influence among the Franks.⁴⁰ He realizes the strong bond existing between church and state,⁴¹ and he requests the Frankish monarchs to call together a council of bishops.⁴²

38. Holmes, p. 531.

39. Ibid., p. 538.

40. Dudden, II, p. 59.

41. Ibid., p. 69.

42. Holmes, p. 538.

He is interested in the suppression of simony;⁴³ he wishes to confirm the charters of the ancient Gallic churches;⁴⁴ he desires a copy of the writings of Irenaeus of Marseilles.⁴⁵ He wishes to send a papal legate who may have power to coerce the Frankish priests who live evil lives.⁴⁶ And above all, he tries to re-introduce into the Frankish church the rigid observance of the canonical laws.⁴⁷ And realizing that the independent Merovingian kings are largely responsible for this lapse in discipline, he calls upon the rulers to assist him in his great reform.⁴⁸ Pope Gregory appeals to the two young Frankish kings⁴⁹ and he begs Queen Brunhilda to assert her influence.⁵⁰ It was through the Frankish court that Gregory hoped to

43. Holmes, p. 539.

44. Ibid., p. 538.

45. Ibid., p. 539.

46. Ibid.

47. Lagarde, p. 348.

48. Ibid., p. 349.

49. Dudden, II, p. 65.

50. Ibid., p. 61.

strengthen and purify the Gallic church.⁵¹

But this relationship, which he attempted to establish with the Frankish kings was not sustained after his death. For more than a century there was no intercourse between the popes and the Merovingian kings.⁵² Yet Gregory's work was not in vain. He had brought christian influences to bear upon the untutored Gallic mind. He had attempted to arrest the lawlessness and heathenism which prevailed.⁵³ For one brief moment he had given a deeply spiritual interpretation to Christianity; he had given an ideal to the Gallic church.

51. Dudden, II, p. 70.

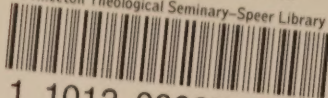
52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., p. 98.

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